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STARBURST

HAWK THE SLAYER

THE SWORD AND SORCERY WAVE BREAKS

BLAKE'S 7 SPECIAL EFFECTS

A.J. "MITCH" MITCHELL ON THE ART OF VIDEO MAGIC

THE PARIS FILM FESTIVAL

THE NEW FANTASY FILMS UNVEILED

PLUS THE ISLAND, MOTHER'S DAY, THE TV AVENGERS,
THE PASSION OF JENNY LOGAN, HARLAN ELLISON,
AND JOHN BROSNAN VS THE FEMINISTS



THE NAMOS CHRONICLES

A NEW CONCEPT IN INTERSTELLAR ADVENTURE

**BONUS FEATURE ON
FANTASY POSTERS!**



HAWK THE SLAYER

THE FIRST OF THE SWORD AND SORCERY WAVE IS UPON US. ALAN JONES LOOKS AT THE FILM AND DOESN'T LIKE WHAT HE SEES. SEE PAGE 32.



THE NEW AVENGERS

PRODUCER/SCRIPT-WRITER BRIAN CLEMENS TALKS ABOUT HIS EARLY LIFE AND HIS PAST PROJECTS THE NEW AVENGERS, KRONOS, THRILLER AND THE PROFESSIONALS. SEE PAGE 38.



Editor: Alan McKenzie
Layout: Ravi Khan
Art Assistance: Steve O'Leary
Editorial Assistance: Gilly Fynn
Distribution: Comag

STARBURST

Writes this issue:
John Brosnan
Tony Crowley
Phil Edwards
John Fleming
Alan Jones
Tise Vahimagi

Publisher: Stan Lee

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STARBURST LETTERS

THE FORCE EXPLAINED

For some time now I have wanted to write to your excellent magazine in connection with the "Force" and now Mr John Brosnan's new column *The Critic Strikes Back* (Starburst 27) has prompted me to do so. Thank you, Mr Brosnan!

I enjoyed both *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back* and considered the Force to be an integral part of both films, not simply a McGuffin as Mr Brosnan would have it. The concept of the Force, I believe, is not "a flimsy collection of pseudo-mystical ideas Lucas probably flung together in the bath one morning". In the following I will try to show where I think George Lucas got the idea for the Force and also Yoda, taking for granted that most folk know that Ben Kanobi was based on a Samurai character, probably from *The Seven Samurai* by Akira Kurosawa.

What is the Force? According to Kanobi it is an "energy field generated by all living beings, that bound the very universe together". It was a religion to the Jedi Knights, the power that had made them masters of the martial arts, experts with the lightsabre. Kanobi, Yoda and Luke, so far, represent the positive side of force while the Emperor and Darth Vader are of the negative Dark Side. The Force saved Luke a number of times. An understanding of the reality of the Force will also help, and has helped, people in times of need. Mr Brosnan talks of the "watered down mixture of religion - but one that carefully avoids any mention of a deity for fear of offending anyone - a few philosophical banalities, telekinesis and a touch of Zen." I will try to show that this is sheer ignorance on the part of Mr Brosnan. I think that Yoda's description of the Force is very near the truth and that Lucas was far from producing overkill of the concept in *Empire*.

I believe that Lucas had in mind the Chinese concept of Tao

when he used Force. George Lucas more than likely came in contact with the English mystic Alan Watts, either through books, lectures or actually meeting him. Lucas probably moved in the kind of circles that Watts could be found. It was Watts who popularised Eastern Philosophy in California where he lived before his death in 1973. Lucas, a Californian, studied social science at Modesto Junior College and then went to film school at the University of Southern California. Lucas could easily have come across the philosopher before 1973. Watts wrote a number of books on the subject of Eastern Philosophy and Taoism, and was very popular throughout the United States for his lectures. His philosophy was lapped up by young people of the late 60s, especially during the "Flower Power Revolution" which started in California. I cannot say that I am sure that Lucas was influenced by Watts but it is a strong possibility.

There is a famous first line from the Tao Ta Ch'ing, the 'bible' of the Taoists; *"The Tao that can be spoken of is not the eternal Tao"*.

In the book *Tao: The Water-course Way* by Alan Watts, completed after his death by Al Chung-Liang Huang, the above quote is translated in a number of different ways, and one of these ways is: *"The Force that is forced isn't true Force"*. I believe this is where Lucas got the idea for the Force. I don't know how long he was planning *Star Wars* but he had made another science fiction film back in 1970, *THX-1138*. If he was toying with the idea for his *Star Wars* films sometime before that he may have even discussed the idea with Alan Watts who lived near Santa Barbara.

Yoda is also of Oriental origin I believe. In the scene in Yoda's house the wisened gnome says "I have trained Jedi for eight hundred years". This accurately coincides with the age of the legendary P'ang Tzu, the Chinese Mathusalem. This ancient, according to tradition, lived about

four thousand years ago and had obtained his great age by means of herbs and certain exercises. Little is known of P'ang except that his real name was Chien Kieng and that having taught some of his secrets to a Shang dynasty emperor he had to flee when the said dictator wanted to kill his teacher. That was when Old P'ang was 767 years old, he was seen many years later in the Far Western territory and is usually said to have reached the age of 800. Again I have no evidence that Lucas got the character Yoda from his knowledge of China, but it does seem to be somewhat of a coincidence.

I believe that the Force is in reality Tao! What is the Tao? When asked by a student this question, the great Ch'ien master Yun-men answered: "Walk on". In fact the Chinese ideogram that represents Tao is a crossroads or path enclosing a head thus meaning a direction one should go. Tao is often translated as way. In Japanese it is "Do", as in Judo, Kendo and Aikido, the latter being of some interest in relation to the Force. The Tao was related over 2,000 years ago mainly in the Tao Ta Ching and the works of Chuang-tzu. Many of the ideas of these early philosophers were adopted by Ch'en, which became Zen in Japan. One writer described Buddhism as the father of Zen and Taoism the mother. Many famous martial artists have followed the philosophy of Tao. When I speak of martial artists I don't mean Bruce Lee, because compared to some of the past kung-fu men Lee was a novice. One of the greatest martial artists of the 1930s was Sun Lu-tang, who had been taught by a Taoist monk. This man was seen to do some incredible feats, including the defeating of thirty men (30) with only a broom as a weapon. Another martial artist who died recently was Cheng Man-Ch'ing who could not be touched if he didn't wish to be... he was so fast even in his seventies. In his earlier years he had defeated many of the strongest opponents and there are photographs of him

standing rooted to the ground unable to be moved even by four strong men. A great Japanese martial artist and founder of the art of Aikido was Morihei Uyeshiba and there is film of this man at the age of eighty throwing men across rooms without the slightest effort and I have seen his son throw six men at once. All these men, and more, understood the Tao and made use of that knowledge.

The Tao is not a deity in the Western sense of the word and therefore if Lucas did use the Tao as the basis of the Force then there would be no mention of a deity. But what is the Tao you may ask? I'll quote from the Tao Te Ching:

There is something misty, obscure, which is complete before heaven and earth existed; tranquil, quiet, existing alone without change, moving without being effected. It could be the mother of all things. I don't know what its name is, so I'll call it Tao... The Tao flows everywhere, left and right, all things depend on it, and it doesn't desert them. But it lays no claims to its accomplishments. It loves and nourishes everything but does not lord over them.

The Tao can be described to be something that flows through everything... it's like water... it's everywhere, it feeds and creates like water, it is gentle and yet can wear away the hardest of rocks... you can't really destroy it, it just moves out of the way or changes its appearance only to return later. It is terribly difficult, more than likely impossible, to say what the Tao actually is. But it exists and can be felt. Relaxation, emptying oneself of all those chattering monkeys called thoughts can open you to the Tao. And it is this method that Lucas chose to use for Luke in his films. The talk of positive and negative sides of the Force can also be found in the T'ai Chi, Yin-Yang.

For young people to think of Yoda to be something special is good, in fact if many adults followed some of Yoda's training given to Luke, the world would

be a better place. Much of the philosophy of Yoda is Taoist. For instance: "Forget your old measures. Unlearn, unlearn!", "The Force is your ally... Feel it you must. Feel it flow. Feel the Force around you. Here, between you and me and that tree and that rock...", "Clear your mind of questions. Quiet now be - at peace... Yes... calm. Let go... Passive...", "A Jedi uses the Force for knowledge. Never for attack." and so on... All these are straight forward Taoism. I hate to sound like a preacher but this is not science fiction or fantasy... the Tao exists... we exist and by understanding the Tao and following the Way we can improve ourselves. In the field of meditation, health and in our everyday life the Tao helps. Aikido and T'ai Chi Ch'uan are but two excellent exercises that improve body and mind.

I am very sorry if I have reminded you, but I feel that Mr Brosnan does Lucas an injustice by the comments in his article Starburst 27 and I hope that what I have spoken about above brings some light on what Lucas calls the Force. I don't think it is silly and childish... maybe in this fantasy story Lucas is putting over some of his own beliefs and I certainly believe that these beliefs are in no way going to hurt young people, they may even benefit from following some of Yoda's sayings.

I hope my letter is of some interest to you.

Charles W. Gunther,
Flint,
Clwyd.

DARROW FANS

Congratulations for finally getting around to an interview with Paul Darrow in issue 28.

He certainly deserves the six pages devoted to him, as he has brought a novel, interesting, credible character to the screen.

Although there was a photo of Darrow from the Robin Hood tv series, no further mention was made of this. His performance was, as usual, excellent but let us

hope that while continuing in the series Blake's 7 as the enigmatic Avon, he is also given leeway to further his acting talents in other directions.

By the way, any idea when *Dreke's Venture* will be shown in the London area?

Keep up the great work on *Starburst*, which is the only magazine I can bear to read from cover to cover!

Claire Gentle,
Slough,
Berks.

I have bought *Starburst* from its inception and enjoy it but I have to write and say thank you especially for issue 28 and the lovely, lengthy interview with Paul Darrow and for the glorious colour picture.

Anne Barrett,
Carlisle,
Cumbria.

Mr Darrow,

I just read the interview with yourself in the latest issue of *Starburst*. I sincerely hope they misrepresent you. Because if they didn't, there seems to be a slight imbalance in your views, one that may be at the root of what is wrong with Blake's 7.

The section I found infuriating, then worrying, then disappointing, went like this.

Darrow: I'm doing that episode where I meet my old girl friend.

9 year old: Oh no-o-o! You don't kiss her do you? (pause) I bet I know what you do! You kill her don't you? You would!

What in hell you find amusing in that little catalogue of horror, I don't know, but it is not funny. I grant that children tend to have blood-thirsty minds - that's a consequence of not understanding what death is all about. And mayhap our system of censorship is geared to pretend to the unknowing young that sexuality is boring because it stops things moving.

Star Trek is wildly misogynistic, chauvinistic, brutal, American and offensive in its attitudes towards women (unfit for command, easily mentally unstable, shallow, poor judges of

character, etc) and carries an even more offensive under-tone of homosexuality that has been quite gleefully seized upon by the fans.

Blake's 7 is worse. It is sexual. Passionless, manipulative, inconsequential.

The reason may lie with that child's point and your approval. I told a fan one week before it was screened that the girl would turn out to be a traitor and would be killed. It's in the nature of the series, not of the character. Just as *Trek* repeatedly pitted its male crew members one after another in stories that had them fell medly, passionately, irrevocably in destructive (because it was inevitably sterile) love, so Blake's 7 continued to portray incidents in which anyone or anything that came into contact with them got wiped out, destroyed, decimated or murdered.

That one stroke against Blake's 7. That development only occurs outside the series, like those sudden quantum jumps of electrons that leave them in different states without the actual process of change being observed. Nothing can change, so destruction follows failure follows...

The second stroke is your amused reaction to the small boy: That it was fine for him to accept you as a murderer but not as a tender lover. God forbid that Blake's 7 should contain such foul content as tenderness!

I doubt these comments will bother you. As you say, you culture yourself as the loner protagonist, self-sufficient, pragmatic, controlled. What's worrying is that you consider this a suitable character for children to idolize. Far be it from me to lambast anyone who admires the superlative Tanith Lee (one of the most attractive authors around) but somehow, somewhere I learned that the repressed/pragmatic/murderous bastard is a monster of the worst human stripe.

And rubbish also to your "he betrayed him, he killed her... very necessary". What you do to traitors is expose them, isolate them and leave them - if your

space ship can take you twenty light years away in as many seconds, so much the better. If Avon only killed because she betrayed him, he isn't a pragmatist, he's acting for revenge... he's a murderer.

But then again, when the national pastime becomes a three month betting mereston on who shot somebody, perhaps I am out of step preferring kiss over kill and character over disconnected-zombie-crow-for-a-twee-spaceship.
Ian Covell,
Middlesbrough,
Cleveland.

Alan McKenzie replies: It's amazing what you can find in an innocuous tv show provided you look hard enough. *Star Trek* contains an "offensive undertone of homosexuality"? Blake's 7 is passionless and manipulative? I rather think that with Blake's 7, Ian, you are mistaking your intense dislike for Avon as a person for an overall immortality in the show, despite your comment that "it's in the nature of the series, not of the character".

I'm sure the fans of both *Star Trek* and Blake's 7 will have plenty to say in reply to your comments. But the penultimate word must go to Paul Darrow. When I showed him your letter he said, "You might point out that one of the reasons - and a pretty good one - that Avon killed his girlfriend was that she was trying to shoot him in the back at the time."

Now in the light of that it seems to me as though you didn't even see the episode of Blake's 7 in question...

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THINGS TO COME

PILLARS OF THE INDUSTRY

We have, fantasy lovers all... we have arrived! Latest box-office statistics from America underline what we've all been maintaining for some time now — that the fantasy film impact on overall film business has never been higher. Ten years ago, our kind of films — science fiction, horror, supernatural, gothic, and other allied fantasies — was but 5% of cinema business. In 1980, we leapt up to some 37% of the cinematic pie!

Some say it's all due to George Lucas. Others vote for Spielberg or Romero, Stephen King or Clark Kent. There may even be some who cerry journalistic chauvinism a mite too far and insist such increased business is connected with Starburst itself. Obviously sf, or indeed G.L., is greatly responsible for this astronomic rise, with the Star Wars films; plus the global appetite for Close Encounters, Superman, Alien... you know how the rest of that hymn goes.

However, these films are *not* included in these figures from America. Don't blame me; I didn't make the calculations. Once again, as with our annual all-time fantasy film listings, we're indebted to the 75-year-old show business bible, *Variety*, for the information. One of the paper's staffmen, Lawrence Cohn, did the detailed research. And to prove his point about the genre's impact on business, he preferred to stick to low-budget product only, horror films in the main, and those which earned more than a million dollars in particular.

I've no complaint with that, because he still does *our* movies a great service. We're really on the map now. And how!

But how much more so we really are can only be estimated. If, for instance, Cohn had included the mega-hits, not to mention the genre send-ups (Young Frankenstein, Love at First Bite, *et al*), plus all the continual re-releases and mounting

takes of certain schlock horror favourites, there is little doubt that the reel picture of fantasy films' dent in the cinema mart would be closer to a phenomenal 50% of business... and then some.

Cohn starts his chart in 1970, when fantasy projects were more in evidence in the rest of the world than in the United States; thanks to Europe, and Britain and Italy. If you want the actual scoreline, it was: World 70, America 18. No contest!

The box-office appeal of such films, however, was miniscule; the 5% mentioned, with five only of the 88 films making a million, or more. Even by 1973, when ten films broke the million barrier, our slice of movie trade had crept up only to 13%.

For Europe, 1972 was the zenith. The pride before the fell... into sex-comedies; Confessions of a Window Cleaning Driving Instructor in a Holiday Camp, as far as Britain was concerned. (Italy, too, come to that). From there on, we slipped out of the reckoning, way down to as little as 30 movies shot in 1975. The boom, begun by Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* in the late 60s, was fizzling out.

At least that was the story in production... on the studio floor. At the box-office, a different tale. The fewer films had been rather better made (or sold), and the all-time low number of 1975 product — World 29, America 16 — resulted in the highest number of millionaire movies for three years, and a great leap forward to taking 21% of the business.

Whet Polanski's lead did not quite achieve, fell to Billy Friedkin to bring about. Once *The Exorcist* made nonsense of the mere million-dollar take by amassing as much as 66,300,000 dollars everyone got shook up. Fans in their seats. Producers in their penthouses. Hollywood moved in and took over — as it did in the case of most other successful genres. As French director Bertrand Tavernier, himself the maker of a fine sf

film, *Deathwatch* (Starburst 23), said recently in Chicago, America dominates, wiping out British productions, and doing much the same around the rest of Europe.

Hollywood, therefore, easily beat Europe in fantasy production for three years out of the next five. The 1980 scoreline, still to be fully tabulated (the game is over, but the goals haven't all been logged) is something like: World 32, America 45. It just doesn't matter if *Star Wars*, *Alien*, *Superman*, *Flash Gordon* and the rest are made here — they don't count as British movies. Little, if any, of the productions costs are sterling investments.

After Friedkin, came Spielberg's *Jaws* — scaring us to the tune of 102,650,000 dollars in ticket money. In 1976, it was *The Omen*: 27,850,000 dollars. And then, what else, but *Star Wars*...

127-million dollars. And it's been a box-office blitz ever since, until the kind of movies — our kind, people! — which had earned a mere 18-million dollars in 1970 for that mere 5% of the action, will have soared to beyond 440-million dollars by the time 1980's accountancy is complete.

And, as any regular reader of this column will know, it ain't over yet. *Superman II*, *Flash Gordon*, *Scanners*, *The Howling*, *Conan*, *Dead and Buried*, *Escape from New York*, *Altered States*, *Wolfen*, *Clash of the Titans*... and *The Revenge of the Jedi*...

No, not over yet, not by a long chalk. Plenty more in the pipeline, and perhaps it's time I put away Lawrence Cohn's good calculating news and got on with reporting the latest projects waiting in the wings...



Bertrand Tavernier directs Harvey Keitel on location with *Deathwatch*.



ENTER FRAZETTA

The illustrations for this panel are by Neal Adams from the storyboards for an unused scene in *Conan*.



Artist extraordinary Frank Frazetta could have his own first movie on the screen before the much delayed *Conan* is finally shot, based on his artwork . . . With John Milius still waiting for the off, and hoping that Arnold Schwarzenegger's muscles have kept in trim all this time, Frazetta has already begun work on his movie. It's an animation fantasy. Title? *Dorn*. Subject? "Primal settings, barbarians and luscious woman." (Well, yes it was a silly question).

Frazetta is co-producing his movie with Ralph Bakshi, the Lord of the Rings animator, now set up in new studios in Sunland, on the northern environs of Los Angeles. Bakshi has a new team, too (200 strong instead of yesterday's mere 35) and a block programme of four new features afoot, (or apencil), at the combined outlay of 40-million dollars. Apart from his Frank Frazetta deal, Ralph the lad is into a *Crime* history of America and a "very risqué" version of *The Canterbury Tales*.

George Romero, bleated for the current glut of blood-soaked (and talentless) ghoulies, seems to have had enough of them. Either that, or he's plainly too wretched up in preparing his Stephen King ventures. Whatever the official reason, George is *not* connected with the next in his celebrated zombie series: *Return of the Dead*. Furthermore, although the film will be shot in his neck of the woods, Pittsburg, its backing derives from Chicago, and a certain film financier called John Fox.

There should still be something of the old Romero feel to the venture. It's being directed by John Russo, co-scenarist with George of the original *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), who recently made his directing debut with a chiller called *Midnight*. In other words, just as, by apparently prior arrangements, Russo was left out of the *Zombies* (*Dawn of the Dead*) section, Romero is now out of their *Return*. Why, exactly, he's not

saying. Not yet. Maybe Romero knows something we don't know . . . ?

Not really; because I know (and fear) it too. It's not good. The third zombie cepar sounds uncommonly like a sell-out con-job. No overt violence, little blood, decapitations or any other Romero niceties — that's becker John Fox's orders. "We wouldn't dream," he says, "of putting in the kind of violence we're seeing in some of the junk in release." But surely that's what made the zombie movies such a huge hit in the first place? Leaving blood and gore out of the Romero cycle, is like taking the songs out of a musical, the the guns from a Western.

What is going on? I'll tell you what's going on. John Fox wants a movie to make a quick killing with in the cinema — in order to just as quickly flog it off to television. In that case, I suggest he comes up with a better title. *Zombie* for the *Zombies*, perhaps?

THE LIVING DEAD PART III



Above: A grisly Zombie from Romero's equally grisly *Zombie* (*Dawn of the Dead*).

Right: Director George Romero.

THINGS TO COME



Above: The villains of Superman II. (Left to right) Jack O'Halloran as Non, Terence Stamp as General Zod and Sarah Douglas as Ursa.

SUPERMAN II

Delayed or not, Superman II is looking good. But very good. I caught a trailer of it the other day and I have to say, no matter what my reservations were about the first, the sequel looks very sharp indeed. This time, as you may have heard — seen? — not only Chris Reeve is up in the clouds. Everybody's flying! Well, nearly everybody — Supie's foes escaping from their banishment in the first film: Terrence Stamp's General Zod, Sarah Douglas' Ursa and mighty Jack O'Halloran's Non. The flying's better, too. And D'Halloran and Chris have one terrific fight sequence — right out of the comic books. (Thanks to Richard Lester who, yes, will be fully credited as director). Settings include Paris, Washington and Niagara Falls. The fun's funnier, action swifter and as the American hype puts it, "if you've only seen the first part, you've not seen the best part."

by the massive retings win of the tv mini-series, Shogun, uncle Rog' has rapidly released a Japanese movie called Shogun Assassin. Dr indeed, three Japanese movies in one. Together (one presumes) with Tokyo's Toho combine, Corman's New World editors, led by Lee Percy, have fashioned this 86-minute blood 'n' guts spiller from the bloodier portions of Japan's two Baby-Cart sword-smith shockers, plus a dozen minutes from the first of the series, *Sword of Vengeance*. The mix, not to mention the dubbing, is all rather reminiscent of the way Woody Allen dubbed a Tokyo comedy and called it *What's Up Tiger Lily?* ten years ago or more. (It's lately arrived in France as *Woody Allen Numero Uni*) Incidentally, the voice of the sword-swiping hero (hecking off foes' arms, legs, heads, and literally soaking the camera lens at times) is supplied by Lamont Johnson — director of 1972's *The Groundstar Conspiracy*. The part really calls for John Cleese.

Incidentally (part two), the voice of Darth Vader, James Earl Jones, appears in another of this new genre (Japanese sword and sorcery and buckets of blood) called *The Bushido Blade*. Just the one movie this time, but a heavy American-Japanese affair, also featuring among others, the greatest samurai swordsman of 'em all, Toshiro Mifune. Knowing George Lucas's love of Kurosawa films, I wouldn't be surprised if Mifune turned up in a *Star Wars* tale in the not too distant future.

SPANISH SWORDS

Having completed his highly expensive version of Jules Verne's *Monster Island*, Spanish director J. Simon Piquer (yes, the very man responsible for *Super Sonic Men!*) is entering the sword and sorcery business. *Nagor The Warrior* goes before the cameras in the Spring, with Piquer in charge of his *Monster* team — including special affectionist Emilio Ruiz. No casting as yet, but Simon Piquer has a thing about British actors. Terry Stamp and Peter Cushing heed up his *Monster Island* stars.

SHOCK TREAT

Line-up for the Rocky Horror Sequel Show — *Shock Treatment*, officially — at Lee International Studios, in Wembley, is headed by American Cliff da Young and Jessica Harper. He's out of the Centennial series, but did better work as Bobby Kennedy (opposite Bill Davana's JFK) in the tele-

movie based on the Cuban missile drama. She . . . well, we know who she is, right? One of Da Palma's finds in *Phantom of the Paradise*, and a Dario Argento favourite ever since (Woody Allen's too in *Love and Death* and *Stardust Memories*). Naturally, Richard O'Brien is also lurking in the cast (he wrote the script with director Jim Sharman). Also getting the treatment: plummy voiced Chetle Gray, batty Berry Humphries and Nell Campbell.

ALLIGATOR!

And he thought he had problems with *The Black Hole* . . . I Child's play compared with what Robert Forster has to put up with in Lewis Taague's big winner in movie monster stakes. It lives 50 ft long, it weighs 2,000 lbs. And look out, buster — it's breaking loose!

It being the pet a young girl's father dumped down the toilet a

dozen years ago, and which has been living in the sewers ever since, feeding very nicely thank you off dead dogs, similarly disposed of down the tubes by the friendly, neighbourhood (what else) chemical factory. But what is this beast? The title tells all. *Alligator*.

John Sayles, latest great hope from the Cornelia factory and now working in harness with Spielberg, wrote the script. Forster is as glum as ever, even when sharing herpatologist Robin Riker's bad (she's the kid who owned the beastie the dozen years before). The film has been doing so well in America, a sequel is planned . . .

And no wonder! This monster 'gator steals the antira show. He's better than Bruce in *Jaws*. This one actually eats the mayor . . .

CORMAN'S TRICKS

You've really got to smile at Roger Corman's cheek. Inspired

FINNEY'S WOLFEN

Having made his movie comeback in the up-market horror item, *Wolfen*, Albert Finney stays in our neighbourhood in *Looker*, his second successive American movie in recent months. (With a third to come: *Annies*). *Looker*, I must say is looking good. It's the latest from Westworld's creator, writer-director Michael Crichton, co-stars James Coburn, Leigh Taylor Young (and lovely) and Susan Dey. Albie plays a plastic surgeon, and the chiller is expected to do for the cosmetic

THINGS TO COME

industry what Crichton's *Coma* did for... frozen foods.

DEVILISH KIDS

Five Omenish kids on the loose. Adults being wasted one after the other... Deaths by hanging, fire, knife and piranha fish... Such are the questionable treats in store in Sean MacGregor's *Devil Times Five* — which invokes the good name of *The Village of the Damned* in its hype and should know better. It's no way as good as that! The film begins with a bus crashing down a mountain road and into a canyon below. Five survivors crawl out of the spectacular wreckage and are tended by three doctors, their wives and the caretaker of the beautiful winter home they're staying in. Then everything goes *phfft!* Telephone lines break down. The generator stops. The cars won't start. And the adults begin dying. The nice, little kids, you see, were on a day's outing from the "acute" ward of the nearby mental institution... Veterans Sorrell Brooke (from *The Dukes of Hazzard*) and Gene Evans (Miss Ellie's brother in *Dallas*) look as embarrassed by the whole proceedings as teenage rave Leif Garrett, the ax-skateboarding disc "star".

SO MAMA KNOWS BEST...?

Well, yes, I'll agree the post-work is very cute. More than that, it's exceedingly apt. *Mama Dracula* is a bust! A sad waste of everyone's time: the cast, the crew and audiences alike. Bob Dupee seemed to like it a lot (*Starburst* 27). I've no idea what version (or sections) he saw at Cannes, but I've since caught the finished, English-speaking print in Paris, and I'm here to tell you — don't waste your time!

The notion of sanding up the Countess Dracula legend, much the manner of George Hamilton's *Love At First Bite*, had some

merit to it. Not a lot but some. On paper, at least. On screen, Boris Szuzlinger's Belgian satire is over-blown, over-indulgent, over-acted and over-long. There's no comedy to speak of (ie; what there is is unspeakable), no wit, no *panache* at all. Half the cast (the Americans like Louise Fletcher in the title role; how her Oscar must be blushing! transpose their v's and w's and uses 'disses' and 'dets' to sound (comically?) foreign, while the rest of the cast (the Europeans) have great difficulty in talking English beyond, for instance, Maria Schneider's

deadly dull monotoned police-women.

The story, of big Mama's search for an everlasting supply of fake blood due to the lack of the genuine "wargin" article, gets absolutely nowhere and takes too long to unravel and churn to an end. (It doesn't find one, in fact. Suddenly, the film stops. Not suddenly enough). As for Mama's twin sons, the Belgian (comics, it says here) the Wajnberg brothers, the less said the better. One of them helped write this mess. The other should have read it. It's all so wery end voefully emeteur!



Above: Louise Fletcher as *Mama Dracula*, supported by one (which?) of the Wajnberg twins. Left: The ad art for the film. Below left: The ad art for *Terror Express*.



Screening in Cannes
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Salle Cinema National
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ALL ABOARD...

Anything Jamie Lee Curtis can do, Silvio Dionisio can do better... Perhaps. That's the sales pitch anyway for Fernando Beldi's spaghetti-thriller about a trainload of passengers held hostage by a *Clockwork Orange* gang of Italian ruffians on the *Terror Express*. Jamie's *Terror Train* (just as express when directed by British editor Roger Spottiswoode in Canada) has much the same setting, if younger characters in peril; plus more emphasis on

shocks and actual suspense than the Rome-made effort which swoops any such exotica for plain erotica.

Which film came about first is hard to tell; they drew, I'd say, in simply exploiting *Murder on the Orient Express* for the youth market. Greet atmospheric photography in both cases, though maybe Jamie's cameraman — actually Kubrick's — John Alcott has the edge on Giuseppe Aquini.

THINGS TO COME

SUPERHEAVY

"You kidding? You wanna rumble with me . . . I" Big Jack O'Halloran, on laava from Superman II (wharain he rumbles mightily with Supie himself), turns up in Robert Ellis Miller's pool-shark thriller, *The Baltimore Bullet* — out-weighing, distancing and acting feisty newcomer Bruce Boxleitner.



Above: Jack O'Halloran in *The Baltimore Bullet* (gets around, doesn't he?).

HYDE AGAIN

A swift successor to David Hemming's BBC-tv version of Jekyll and Hyde has been visiting London for locations. It's an English-language French film production, costing cheerfully meagre 1,200,000 dollars, sticking to the usual title (and spelling) but veering, I'm sure, from the Robert Louis Stevenson original. Why? Because of the director of this 17th (or so) Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde is the often highly erotic Polish film-maker, Walerian Borowczyk. Playing the London medic with the split personality is West German pretty boy, Udo Keier — Andy Werhol's Frankenstein that was. Also involved: new beauty Marianne Pierre and old reliable Patrick Magee.

Kirk Douglas's tv version of J & H, is now on sale, by the way

on cassette. I shouldn't bother. Wait for Fredric March's 1932 version, or better still, Martine Beswick's Hammer femme-lib rendering, Dr Jekyll and Sister Hyde (1971).

I'm sorry to say so, but I can't see Udo Keier holding a candle to any of these previous portraits. The role needs a particularly good actor: he has to play both roles after all. Previous exponents of this plum dual role include Alwin Nauss in the 1910 silent version in America, Spencer Tracy in the flawed 1941 version. Boris Karloff in a 1953 Abbot and Costello romp, Jean-Louis Berreault in the last French version (1959), Paul Massie and of course Chris Lee's thinly disguised Dr Marlowe and Mr Blake in *I, Monster* (1970).

PEEP AGAIN

Once has Jekyll and Hyde in his can, Walerian Borowczyk — otherwise known, thankfully as "Boro" — plans to stay on the remake trail with his Whodunnit Production backers in Paris. He'll take a 1981 view of Michael Powell's masterly 1959 psychosuspenser, *Peeping Tom*. (And hopefully without Udo Keier in the Karl-Heinz role, please, Boro!) As usual with any re-make, I wish he would leave well alone. Of course he can (and will) make it sexier with 1981 freedoms than Powell could manage before. But Powell's film is a pure classic and should rather be re-issued than re-made.

BALLARD COMETH . . .

Don Boyd is about the only British producer still producing films instead of talking about it. He is planning a movie version of *The Drowned World*, based on the sf novel by . . . but you know, of course . . . J.G. Ballard.

ASIMOV TOO

And over in Hollywood, Warner Brothers have announced plans for a film of *I, Robot* by Isaac Asimov. Sounds good! But . . . there *always* has to be a but . . . Irvin Kershner will direct.

After the hash he made of *The Empire Strikes Back*, that's hardly inspired thinking, that's money talking! The money Empire made, and would have done even if Donald Duck had directed. The *Robot* script is penned by Herlen Ellison and the movie is being co-produced by Eddie and Millie Lewis and John Mentley . . . oh that's who he is, the fellow who's just taken over producing *Buck Rogers* on tv.

ZERO HOUR

Hemmer's recent tv series, *Roald Dahl's*, too, are serving a purpose even greater than earning dollars for the old country . . . They've alerted others to the old 50s/60s idea of scary tales series on the box. Italy has jumped in first with a 13-episode bunch of short (13 minute) chillers, called *Zero Hour* and *Beyond* (sounds familiar?) starring Richard Harrison, on

erstwhile spaghetti Western cowpokes . . . while Merio Chery has a similar success under way, *Fascination with the Bizarre*.

Meantime in Canada, Warner Brothers are catching up by shooting a pilot in Toronto (on tape) for a possible Canadian series with the generic title, *Castle Rock*. Designed as an hour gothic show, written and produced by Mal and Ethel Brez, this harkens back to the days of Dan Curtis' daytime series, *Dark Shadows*, which filled a thousand hours between 1966-71.

Not much money is being invested in the Canadian idea. The pilot costs about 300,000 dollars (shooting on tape cuts the budgets, of course), and if it goes to a full series, each hour will be budgeted at around 150,000 dollars about the cost of one of those American daytime soap operas. But whoever seep big bucks guaranteed big successes?

SHORT STORIES



Above: The devastating Ornella Muti as the equally devastating Princess Aura in *Flash Gordon*.

Latest movies on video-cassette from MGM include Michael Crichton's *Coma*, and the three fantasy winners of all time: *The Wizard of Oz*, *Blow Up* and a little something called 2001 . . . Having long since escaped *The Island of Dr Moreau*, Michael York is being castaway again as Robinson Crusoe for a new French tv series . . . After touring the world, promoting *Flash Gordon* (well, she'll make more front page photos than Sam Jones), Ornella Muti starts *Tales of Ordinary Madness* in Rome with Ben Gazzara and Isabelle Huppert . . .

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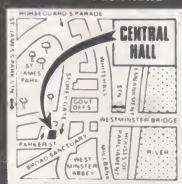
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Author Peter Benchley has acquired something of a reputation around Hollywood after his hits like *Jaws* and *The Deep*. Now he makes his script-writing debut with *The Island*, a contemporary Bermuda Triangle tale with pirates as the monsters. Review by Tony Crawley.

Welcome to The Robert Newton Lookalike Contest. All heave-ho m'hearties and roll dem eyes. Or then again, Carry On Pirates. No laughs. Just blood. And sadism. And more blood. Buckets of it, n'hearties!

Bill Friedkin has a lot to answer for. Since his success with *The Exorcist*, the bigger names have all wanted a bash at horror. Their reasons are various and none of them connected with a feeling for the genre. They want to bolster fading careers before the final rot sets in, make a comeback after years in the cold or on tv (there's a difference?) or maybe win a box-office blitz and thereby spread their name to newer, wider areas of the world. More people, for example, saw Max Von Sydow as *The Exorcist* than in all his Bergman masterpieces combined.

The trouble with injecting name actors (okay then, stars) is (a) we know them too well from their previous, more successful images and (b) they seem to be slumming, deigning to perform in something plainly beneath their artistic dignity. "I'm doing this one for my kids, they just love all that horror rubbish."

You never felt that with Boris or Bela, Christopher or Peter. They believed in what they were doing, or if they didn't, they sure as hell gave the impression they did. And that, I would suppose, is really what acting, good acting, is all about. Belief both from and in the actors suspending any nagging disbelief in the audience.

You don't get that feeling with a lot of the moonlighting stars. You know the ones I mean...

We've had Burton making a right hash out of *Exorcist II* — Oscar-winning Louise Fletcher not helping it much, either. Since when, incidentally, she has turned in an even worse showing as Mama

Dracula. (I don't know what version Bob Dupea saw for Starburst 27, but the final, complete release-print I recently saw in Paris, was one gigantic no-no).

We've had Greg Peck in *Omen I* and William Holden in *Omen II*, Piper Laurie delivering below par compared to her Carrie highspot, and Carrie Snodgrass starring in others as bad as her lowspot, *The Fury*. We've had Yvonne De Carlo in *Silent Scream*, Talia Shire in the unspeakable *Prophecy*. We've also had George C. Scott, marginally better than any of them, digging up children in wells when he should have been composing symphonies in *The Changeling*. And we've had his wife, Trish Van Devere, moving on from that one to cope with *The Hearse*.

Worst of the lot? That's easy. No, not Jack Nicholson, the Mad Axeman of Elstree (he was great!) but Kirk Douglas in *The Fury* and *The Final Countdown* and *Saturn 3*. How does he sleep at nights?

And now we have... Michael Caine.

You always used to know where you were with Mike Caine, too. Not any more. Since the ex-Maurice Micklewhite from the East End moved West and settled in Hollywood for reasons of health/wealth/work/tax (take your pick but don't blame him for any of 'em), he has sadly over-developed his working-



class phobia — nay, paranoia — about earning enough umbrellas for the rainy day when he's out of work, and he has done this even more frenetic fervour than when he seemed to be in every British film made in the '60s, for the self-same reason.

I just wonder if he bothers to read his scripts anymore.

The Island is hardly his first brush with horror. He's been around lately in Brian De Palma's *Dressed to Kill*. Caine has also made a couple of literal horrors, more usually described as Irwin Allen productions: *The Swarm* and *Beyond the Poseidon Adventure!* You really must have a thing about rainy day brollies if you associate yourself with manure of this order.

Caine says he makes as many films as possible in Hollywood to reinforce his name in America. One might say, ram it down their throats. I've even read him saying somewhere he's selecting the kind of roles that would be offered to Newman, Redford and Co. The brain of Caine is mainly down the drain! Newman or Redford, Reynolds or Beatty — come to that, Cushing or Lee — wouldn't be seen dead in *Dressed to Kill*, much less *The Island*. (Kirk Douglas, maybe... no, for sure!)

Caine is right about one thing. He was definitely second choice for the magazine

writer hero of *The Island*. Peter Benchley's *Jaws* producers Dick Zanuck and David Brown, offered it first to Anthony Hopkins, the only Britisher to be more gainfully (and artistically) employed than Caine in Hollywood. Hopkins reads his scripts.

I can appreciate what interested Caine about *The Island*. The first half. Well, the first third. The film starts off really rather well, as one expected it would also continue with a guy like Michael Ritchie (*The Candidate*, *Smile*, etc) directing. The opening in question, has a trio of medics suddenly obtaining hatchets in their heads during a boating discussion on the constituent parts of gin.

Our Mike starts off well enough too. There's heaps of opportunities for the laconic humour he handles so well in the scenes (probably his first as a screen parent) with his 12-year-old son, Jeffrey Frank, as they prepare, leave, drive and then crashland their plane on a working holiday! Caine, you see, has secured himself a new assignment. He's the latest hack investigating the Bermuda Triangle which, according to his research, has claimed 600 boats and 2,000 people. (He doesn't mention how many writers).

So... Caine Snr and Jnr crash on this Caribbean island. Not *The Island*, you understand. That's for later, when it's the turn of the film to crash. They meet up



Below: The pirates threaten Blair Maynard (Michael Caine), with actual bodily harm unless he impregnates Beth (Angela Punch McGregor). Above: Maynard is lashed to a wooden frame as a captive of the pirates.



with the first of far too many leering British character hams in Frank Middlemass' old doctor, and soon enough find the source of the Triangular depletion of all that seagoing tonnage. Would you believe — 17th Century pirates? No, neither did I. Well, I did when I read the book, but they don't turn out so well in the film, which is why it falls apart at exactly the kind of seams that Terrence Fisher and the others always managed to hold together. Believability!

You can't believe in this bunch of Ambridge rep types. They look and sound like a shipwrecked *Pirates of Penzance* company — amateur, at that. They're not exactly 17th Century buccaneers. That would have meant ghosts. And that might have been far more effective on screen. No, these "living fossils" are the left overs of 300 years' in-breeding by the pirates of yore and their womenfolk, who first inhabited this lonely isle. They plunder and pillage any vessel passing their portals, with grappling irons, sabres, muskets and almost the cry of Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum.

They're led by David Warner, also not having much luck in his Hollywood scripts since *Holocaust* and *Time After Time*. He's called Jean-David Nau and by the time Caine slips his shackles and mows 'em all down like fairground coco-

nuts, the film has become a highly



Above: Blair Maynard (Michael Caine) pleads with his son to release him. Inset: "Before" and "after" shots of Angela Punch McGregor as Beth, last of the fertile pirate women.

sadistic Apocalypse Nau.

Once these piratical hordes enter the picture (and it was better, as terror always is, when we didn't see them as the cause of it), Caine stops talking — and acting. This could be connected with sheer embarrassment at the acting of his fellow Britons — or the fact that he's their prisoner, their slave, very much in a *Planet of the Apes* situation. He's continually humiliated, tortured (bled by leeches, stung by jellyfish) and forced into impregnating Australian actress Angela Punch McGregor, the only fertile woman left among the motley crew.

The pirate's line must continue, you see. The line also needs fresh leadership. Nau's time is up. His gang prefers the cut of Caine Jnr's jib — and his Colt pistol. So he's tortured as well (his eyes are stretched wider, still wider open by means of pegs) and brainwashed against Dad, who he is supposed to execute. The kid is re-named Tue-Barbe and he's given plenty of shooting practise when joining the cut-throats they massacre a schooner load of American dope-heads — just as they'd probably thought it safe to go back in the water, too.

Caine Snr — probably bemoaning the fact that choice comedy roles like *Alfie* and *California Suite* don't come his way often enough — is bound, chained and generally made a mess of until finally able

to save the day, if not the film. With a great flashing and snarling of teeth (the Robert Newton acting is very catching), he wastes them all, Jnr excluded, with as much sadistic delight as they dished out themselves.

The film's hype "takes you into a world of unimaginable human savagery." Sure, but whose? The pirates' or Caine's? There's an obvious message here somewhere about the corrupting influence of violence, rather like Sam Pekinph's in *Straw Dogs* (with another over-the-top crew of British baddies).

The Island is the third movie from a Peter Benchley book. Since *Jaws*, they've nose-dived in quality. *The Island* actually makes *The Deep* look good — and yet Benchley scripted here for the first time. It's not as easy as weaving his great yarns in book-form. His pirates work well in the book (so does the whole book). They're ridiculous in the movie (so's the whole movie). My advice — read the book. And if you want piratical thrills go see the *Disneyland* version.

As for Caine, well he never gives up. He stays in the horror fantasia mould with *The Hand* as a cartoonist who loses an arm (or does he?). It would not surprise me if Caine returns home by the time he's 50 in three years to succeed Peter Davison as *Dr Who*. If he carries on like this, *Who* else will have him?

The Island (1980)

Michael Caine (as Blair Maynard), David Warner (Jean-David Nau), Angela Punch McGregor (Beth), Frank Middlemass (Dr Windsor), Don Henderson (Rollo), Jeffrey Frank (Justin Maynard, Tue-Barbe), Dudley Sutton (Dr Brazil), Colin Jeavons (Hizzoner), Zakes Mokae (Westcott), Brad Sullivan (Pilot), John O'Leary, Bruce McLaughlin, Jimmy Casino (Doctors), Suzanne Astor (Mrs Ellen Burgess), Susan Bredhoff (Kate), Reg Evans (Jack-the-Bat), Steve Gladstone (Pirate), David Hart (Attendant), Robert Hirschfeld (Cook), Cary Hoffman (Mr Burgess), George Marshall Ruge and John Macchia (Seamen), Ricky Rincin (Manuel), Robert Thomas Salmi (Ship's captain), William Schilling (Gunsmith), Stewart Steinbert (editor), Bob Westmoreland (Charter-boat skipper), Mark Westwood (Coast Guard).

Directed by Michael Ritchie, Script by Peter Benchley from his own novel, Photography by Henri Decae, Sea photography by Neil Roach, Edited by Richard A. Harris, Music by Ennio Morricone, Production design by Dale Hennessey, Costumes by Ann Roth, Set decoration by Robert de Vestel, Special Effects by Albert Whitlock, Matte photography by Bill Taylor, Make-up by Jose Antonio Sanchez, Bob Westmoreland, Sound editors, Tom Bullock, Eugene Finley, Jay Boelkelheide, Vivien H. Gilliam, Bobbe Kurtz, John Nutt, Stunt Co-ordination by Ted Grossman, Assistant directors, Michael Cheyko, Chris Carreras, Pat Walker, Produced by Richard D. Zanuck, David Brown.

A Universal production for C.I.C. release. 114 minutes (10,299 ft). Viewed at the UGC Ermitage cinema, Paris.

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TERROR TRAIN

Jamie Lee Curtis makes her third starring appearance in yet another of the "mad-killer-out-for-revenge" movies which have followed in the wake of her first such film *Halloween*. Review by John Brosnan.

These days it seems that every time I go to a movie I find myself watching Jamie Lee Curtis being chased by mad killers. I know she's only made four films so far (five if you count the Australian movie *Road Games* which hasn't been seen here yet) but it seems like hundreds. I don't want to sound mean but I am beginning to get just a little tired of Ms Curtis.

Terror Train, originally called *Switchback*, is part of the current "mad-killer-out-for-revenge" cycle of horror movies and is as predictable as a British Rail timetable. This time the reason for all the mayhem stems from an incident at a college party when Kenny, a shy student, is tricked into climbing into bed with the corpse of a woman that has been "borrowed" from a morgue. He finds the experience so upsetting he goes completely off the rails (I promise I'll try and keep the railway jokes to a minimum during the rest of this review) and has to be led away to a padded cell.

"Three years later", as they tend to say in this sort of film, the same bunch of young people, now all medical students, are climbing on board a steam train which has been hired for a last night fraternity party. But little do they know that their former colleague, Kenny, is also getting on board. The reason they don't know is because they're all wearing masks and Kenny is wearing the mask belonging to a student called Ed who he has already skewered with a sword (the others had seen poor Ed staggering about with the sword sticking through him but presumed he was just playing about — for medical students they aren't very observant).

The party is a very lavish affair, having been paid for by rich and spoilt "Doc" Manley who, despite his apparent generosity, plans to use the party as a setting for his usual sadistic jokes (it was he who was responsible for sending poor Kenny round the bend in the first place). But before you can say "All Aboard!" the bodies start piling up as the mad killer gets to work, much to the horror of the kindly old train guard Carne (played by kindly old Ben Johnson). Soon not only has Alana's (Jamie Lee Curtis) best friend Mitchy (Sandee Currie) been killed but so has Doc's best friend, Mo (Timothy Webber), who also happens to be Alana's boyfriend. At this rate there's not going to be enough people left to consume all the booze and food that's been brought on board for the party.

Suspicion falls on the handsome magician and party entertainer who is known simply as the Magician (David Copperfield, who is a magician in real life as well as being a character out of a Dickens novel) because Doc discovers that Kenny, who they know has escaped, was an amateur magician (this bit didn't make any sense to me as the Magician doesn't look anything like Kenny, unless



Above left: Doc Marley (Hart Bochner) shares a joint with Mo (Timothy Webber) and Alana (Jamie Lee Curtis). Above right: Doc discovers Mo's body. Below: Alana defends herself from the mad killer with a fire extinguisher. Opposite: The killer hides behind a Halloween mask!



one is supposed to presume that he's changed a lot in three years).

Doc's wrong, of course, and gets his just desserts in a really nerve-jangling sequence where we see him lock himself in a compartment and then frantically search all the places where the killer might possibly be hiding, only to miss the most obvious one of all — after which he literally loses his head (feminists will be pleased to note that more males greet grisly ends in this movie than women do — in fact I think there's only *one* female victim).

I'm not going to say who the killer is disguised as — and I will admit it had me fooled for a while — but needless to say the last section of the movie involves Jamie Lee being chased up and down the train by the maniac. And like all maniacs

in these movies he has the constitution of a horse (an iron horse even), shrugging off wounds that would have lesser mortals dropping in their tracks. But what finally polishes him off is a kiss from Jamie Lee. Yes, you read right. He demands she kiss him, she does so and the next moment he's reliving the night he found himself in bed with the corpse and tangling himself up in a nearby sheet of tarpaulin. What this suggests about Jamie Lee's kissing technique I don't like to even think about (perhaps she's not using the right tooth-paste) but at this point Ben Johnson suddenly makes an appearance (he'd presumably been waiting outside the door until the coast was clear) and bangs the tarpaulin-covered killer over the head with a shovel, causing him to fall out of the train. Now a feminist critic writing in

the magazine *Time Out* has said that: "... being a woman she must finally be saved by the fatherly guard — as usual", but I must disagree. As far as I'm concerned the killer was obviously finished the moment she kissed him. She did it all by herself — just her and those deadly lips. Good on you, Jamie Lee.

Terror Train is okay as these things go — rather too slow in the early stages but it picks up speed in the last third (like the train itself, in fact). It has touches of ingenuity, and provides a few memorable shocks along the way, but basically it has as much substance as the filling in a British Rail sandwich. Let's just hope this particular genre of horror movies runs out of steam soon (sorry) and that the makers of horror films will have to start using their imaginations again.

THE CHANGELING

A Starburst Film Review by John Brosnan

As horror movies go these days this is something of a throw-back. It has more in common with films like *The Haunting* (1963) than *The Exorcist* or *The Amityville Horror*, eschewing graphic horror for more subtle effects. And when you see that it stars George C. Scott and Melvyn Douglas you know that it was intended to be an up-market horror movie from the word go...

Its opening sequence is reminiscent of another upper class horror film, *Don't Look Now* (in fact I would guess that the idea for *The Changeling* was originally inspired by that movie) — composer John Russell (*George C. Scott*) is a helpless witness to the death of both his wife and daughter when a truck skids out of control on an icy road. In an attempt to recover from this disaster he retreats to the Seattle countryside where he rents an old mansion from the local Historical Society, striking up a relationship with the Society's representative, Clair Norman (*Trish Van Devere*), at the same time.

But no sooner has he moved in than strange things start happening — incredibly loud banging noises reverberate through the house (reminding one of the noises in *The Haunting*) and the taps start turning themselves on. It's during the latter manifestation that he receives his first true inkling of the grim secret the mansion contains — the corpse of a drowned boy suddenly appears in a bathtub.

The subsequent discovery of a secret attic room containing a tin bath, an antique wooden wheelchair obviously built for a child and various cobwebbed toys, serves as further proof to Russell that whatever happened in the house all those years ago involved a young boy.

This is confirmed after a seance is held in the mansion and Russell hears the eerie, ghostly voice of a child when he plays back a tape-recording of the event — a voice that no one heard during the seance itself. Returning to the attic room Russell finds himself witnessing the murder that took place there 70 years previously — an invalid boy is callously drowned in his tin bath by a shadowy figure. And as the drowning boy frantically beats on the sides of the metal bath with his fists we realise that this is the origin of the ghostly banging sounds that still echo around the house.

Detective work by Russell leads him to



Above: Composer John Russell (*George C. Scott*) comforts *Clair Norman* (*Trish Van Devere*) after she had been chased from the attic of the mansion by a haunted wheelchair. Below: John and Clair





Above: Claire Norman (Trish Van Devere also Mrs George C. Scott) and John Russell (George C. Scott), Below: A portrait of George C. Scott as the film's hero, John Russell.



the well — now covered by a modern bungalow — where the boy's remains lie buried, along with a gold locket that connects the dead boy with a rich and powerful politician called Joseph Carmichael (*Melvyn Douglas*) who turns out to be the "changeling" of the title. But when Russell's attempts to reveal the truth are frustrated by Carmichael's power and influence the ghost, after years of waiting, seems to lose its patience entirely and unleashes a storm of death and destruction which ends with the house bursting into the inevitable flames. . . .

There are none of the visceral shocks in *The Changeling* that are so prevalent in the current wave of horror movies, though a sequence where the antique wheelchair suddenly comes to life and chases Trish Van Devere out of the attic and down three flights of stairs is pretty frightening (at least I found it so); instead it works by creating an atmosphere of unease that is slowly cumulative. Or to put it another way, it sneaks up on you instead of simply yelling "Boo!" in your face. Overall this approach works effectively, particularly in the sequences involving the digging up of the well beneath the house, but I suspect that audiences today may find it somewhat tame.

Director of *The Changeling* was the Hungarian-born Peter Medak who has worked in the British film industry since he was a teenager. He's probably best known for the bizarre *The Ruling Class* which starred Peter O'Toole as the aristocrat who first thinks he's Jesus Christ and then Jack the Ripper. A personal favourite of mine, *The Ruling Class* was a resounding flop at the box office and Medak's career hasn't exactly flourished since then (his 1978 movie, *The Odd Job*, a vehicle for Monty Python's Graham Chapman, was also a flop) but one hopes that *The Changeling* will be enough of a success to put him in demand again. The movie is basically old and familiar territory revisited but Medak is a good enough film maker to make you feel the visit has been worthwhile.

The Changeling (1980)

George C. Scott (as John Russell), Trish Van Devere (Claire Norman), Melvyn Douglas (Senator Joe Carmichael), Jean Marsh (Mrs Russell), Barry Morse (Dr Pemberton), Bernard Behrens (Robert Lingstrom), Roberta Maxwell (Eve Lingstrom), Chris Gampel (Turtle), Madeline Sherwood (Mrs Norman), James B. Douglas (Eugene Carmichael), Ruth Springford (Minnie Huxley), Helen Burns (Lesh Harmon), Eric Christmas (Albert Harmon).

Directed by Peter Medak, Screenplay by William Gray and Diana Maddox from a story by Russell Hunter, Director of Photography John Coquillon, Art director Reuben Freed, Edited by Lilla Pederson, Special effects co-ordinated by Gene Grigg, Produced by Joel B. Michaels and Gareth H. Drabinsky.

THE PARIS FILM FESTIVAL

November 1980 saw the tenth Paris Science Fiction and Fantasy Film Festival. Starburst regular Phil Edwards was a member of the Festival Critics Jury and sent this report of the event.



It's like a football match!" shouted Robert Powell over the collected screams of 3000 science fiction and horror movie fans at the opening night of the 10th Paris Science Fiction and Fantasy Film Festival.

Festival director and organiser Alain Schlockoff introduced guest of honour Powell to a mammoth shower of outsize confetti, streamers, paper planes and chants of "Sing-a-Sont! Sing-a-Sont!" "Tomorrow!" replied Schlockoff and the ten day ritual that the festival has become was under way.

Schlockoff started the festival as a small affair in 1972 in an effort to bring a wider spectrum of international fantasy films to the Paris fans and readers of his long-running magazine, *L'Ecran Fantastique*. The festival grew over the years and from the second event in 1973 began awarding prizes in various categories. The ten day event is now one of the major dates on the Paris calendar and the opening night is attended by many of the French social set.

The 1980 festival began with some historic footage of earlier years and a short tribute to fantasy pioneer, Georges Melies, which as expected, brought uproar from the always vocal audience. The festival audience is as much a part of the proceedings as the films and past years have seen films booed off the screen or stopped under a barrage of paper planes.

Almost every evening saw retrospective screenings of old films, included in which were the following: *Scream and Scream Again*, *Vault of Horror*, *City of the Dead*, *And Now the Screaming Starts* and *The House that Dripped Blood*, all of which formed a mini Amicus/Milton Subotsky Festival. Other retrospects included *The Pit* and *the Pendulum* and

the *Fall of the House of Usher* as a tribute to Roger Corman and a special tribute to the late Terence Fisher in the form of a screening of *The Gorgon*. Robert Fuest's charming comedy horror film, *The Abominable Dr Phibes*, was also received warmly and it is of interest to note that all the older films were treated with great respect and reverence by the usually noisy audience. A planned three film tribute to Mario Bava (*Kill Baby Kill*, *Night is the Phantom* and *Planet of the Vampires*), failed to materialise when the distributor decided at the last moment to withdraw the films from the festival programme.

Of the three short films screened, *Le Manege* (stop motion), *Rails* (animation with Dolby Stereo soundtrack) and *La Tendresse Du Maudit*, the latter deserves a special mention. A ten minute stop motion film in which a gargoyle from the Cathedral of Notre Dame comes to life was superbly animated and directed by Jean-Manuel Costa and won a huge round of applause from the none-too-easy to please audience.

And so to the prizes. The Paris Festival is comprised of two juries. The first awards prizes in all categories and the second, the critics' jury, awards a special prize to one film only. The main jury consisted of actress Elisabeth Huppert (President), Igo and Grichka Bogdanoff, *Dr Who* writer Terrance Dicks, Jean Namur and Jean-Pierre Richard.

The Critics' Jury consisted of Alan Jones, Mike Childs (of *Cinefantastique* magazine), Pierre Gires, Gerard Lenne, Jean-Claude Romer and myself.

The Grand Prize (*The Lincor D'or*) went to *Rat Saviour*; the *Special Jury Prize* was taken by *Harlequin* as was *Best Actor* (Robert Powell). *Best Actress* went to the Russian entry *La Chasse Sauvage*



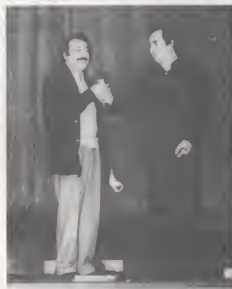
Du Roi Stakh which also received a special jury mention as did the animated short *La Tendresse du Mandit*. The prize for *Best Science Fiction Film* went to *Without Warning* (probably by default, there was precious little sf on show at the festival) and *Rat Saviour* won *Best Screenplay*. The *Best Music* award went to Rober Webb for his music on *The Godsend*.

We of Critics' Jury had pretty well dismissed most of the films awarded prizes by the Grand Jury, though we were unaware of their choices. After a deliberation that lasted a little over an hour, we finally worked out the voting on a points system and the final choice came down to *Harlequin* and *Macabre*. *Harlequin* won by only a few points and it was decided to give a special commendation to Lamberto Bava for his work on *Macabre* and for carrying on the tradition of his father Mario Bava.

However, the fireworks weren't over yet. In an unprecedented move, Elisabeth Huppert took it upon herself, apparently on behalf of the jury, to publicly denounce the winner of the *Audience Prize*, *The City of the Living Dead*, which according to her was the worst kind of exploitation of the human spirit, despite its excellent special effects. Publicity stunt or genuine feeling? Who can tell. Her speech received a solid chorus of boos and catcalls and, in my opinion, deservedly so. Considering that many members of the audience queued for up to five hours every day to see the films, the statement amounted to nothing more than a slap in the face for the audience and an obvious embarrassment to Alain Schlockoff, the Festival Director.

So what is the Festival all about? Certainly not good cinema. Re-reading my notes and these reviews, there were definitely more bad films than good and Paris is a long way to go to see a lot of bad films. But the event is worth it. Many of the films screened at the festival are unlikely to find distribution in England, more to the lack of understanding of the genre by the British distributors than the lack of quality of the films. The Paris Festival is ten days of horror and science fiction, and as almost any fan will tell you, a bad *fantasy* film is still better than a bad film of any other genre. It seems a pity that England doesn't have its own such *Festival of the Fantastic*. As Jean-Claude Romer said at the end of the Jury voting, "*Vive Cinema Fantastique!*".

Special thanks: I would like to thank Alain Schlockoff for inviting me as a member of the Critics' Jury and I would like also to extend special thanks to Frederic Levy for acting as interpreter on several occasions.



Opposite above: The festival organiser, Alain Schlockoff, formally opens the 10th Paris Science Fiction and Fantasy Film Festival. Opposite below: The cover of the Festival Handbook. Above: The brothers Schlockoff, Robert (left) and Alain (right), introduce another night of horror and science fiction to the ever noisy audience at the Festival. Left: Director Lamberto Bava, son of the famous Mario, introduces his latest film to the festival crowds, *Macabre*, while Alain Schlockoff holds the microphone. Below: The Festival attendees crowd the interior of the Cinema Rex in Paris. Note the showers of confetti and makeshift, toilet roll streamers!





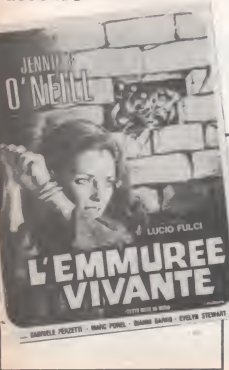
HARLEQUIN

The opening feature was *Harlequin*, which despite its wordy and demanding plot, held the crowd's attention. Although Australian made, this vaguely futuristic story about a magician (Robert Powell) is set in a never-never land of political intrigue and corruption, and managed to score points for originality and the strength of Powell's and David Hemmings' performances. Apart from some slightly below average special effects, *Harlequin* is a truly gripping film and it is a pity that its British distributors didn't promote the film properly when it was released here some months ago. *Harlequin* certainly deserves a much wider audience.

I VIAGGIATORI DELLA SERRA

I Viaggiatori Della Serra is a futuristic fantasy directed by and featuring La Ciga Aux Folles star, Ugo Tognazzi. One of the more serious entries at the festival, it's the story of a middle aged married couple of 49 who go for a very strange vacation to a holiday camp. It turns out to be a kind of euthanasia centre where the draw of a card means death. A witty script by Sandro Parenzo and Tognazzi paints a pretty grim picture of the not-too-distant future. The film falters slightly in the second half with the introduction of a guerrilla group and too many sub-plots but overall, *I Viaggiatori Della Serra* succeeds very well and is deserving of an international audience.

SETTE NOTE IN NERO



Lucio Fulci's 1976 Italian production, *Sette Note in Nero*, was a pleasant surprise when one recalls the same director's *Zombie Flesh Eaters*. Reminiscent of an early period Argento-style mystery thriller, *Sette Note in Nero* tells the story of Virginia (Jennifer O'Neill) a lady with precognitive powers. The convoluted plot deals with a stolen painting, burial alive and bloody murder. Beautifully shot by Sergio Salvati, the film builds to a suspenseful climax in which the fate of the buried alive Virginia hangs in the balance till the well-timed final freeze frame.

THE EVIL

Made in 1978, Gus Trikonis' *The Evil* remains unreviewed in England. It's difficult to understand why, as it is a fairly interesting tale about a possessed house, the gateway to hell, which would score with horror fans here. Well made and with an abundance of convincing mechanical effects, *The Evil* has echoes of *Legend of Hell House*, *Burnt Offerings* and *The Sentinel* and in most cases is superior to any of them. The suspenseful pacing only goes awry when we meet Satan in the form of a horned and white suited Victor Buono. It's definitely a cut above the current crop of blood and guts movies and the film did well on the daily audience polls.



THE CITY OF THE LIVING DEAD



The City of the Living Dead (Le Paura) is yet another Lucio (Zombie Flesh Eaters) Fulci horror offering about the walking dead, though a little superior to that film. Some atmospheric photography by Sergio Salviati saves much of the film's zombie formulaerity and a couple of scenes of stomach-turning horror enliven the proceedings — a power drill through the skull and a long sequence in which a victim of a ghostly priest vomits up everything including intestines and liver is captured lovingly by Fulci's camera.

However, it is Fulci's penchant (or his producer's?) for this kind of graphic bodily corruption and violence which finally destroys any real suspense in his films. It is highly unlikely that City of the Living Dead would receive a release in England without severe censor cuts. You have been warned!

SCARED TO DEATH

Scared to Death turned out to be nothing more than a slavish visual rehash of Alien. Despite an interesting central idea about a scientifically created genetic mutation roaming the Los Angeles sewer system, William Malone's cheap production has little to recommend it. Long-winded scenes of banal dialogue alternate with equally long-winded chases with the tunnels of the sewers standing in for the corridors of the *Nostromo*. The monster — a *Synergor* — comes equipped with Giger-esque biomechanical design, right down to the dripping jaws and deadly tongue.

PROM NIGHT

Prom Night proved more the sort of meat the crowd wanted. This was a second viewing for me and it seemed all the worse for that: a sorry rip-off of *Carris*, *Halloween* and *Saturday Night Fever* and yet another example of the peculiar typecasting of Jamie Lee Curtis as the eternal college girl under threat. A protracted dance sequence with Jamie Lee trying to outdo John Travolta in *Saturday Night Fever* came over as embarrassing and makes me cringe whenever I think about it. Disastrous and disappointing, the occasional scenes of terror and bloodletting kept the often blood-crazed Paris audience involved and the graphic decapitation at the film's climax brought a huge round of applause.



RAT SAVIOUR

Rat Saviour (Izbavitelj), a 1977 curio from Yugoslavia, proved to be the dullest type of fantasy imaginable. Set in the 30s, the film is a political allegory (don't they make any films in Eastern Europe just for entertainment?) about a society of rat-people (Fascists). The film is statically directed and fleetly photographed. The make-up and special effects are none too convincing either and the film lacks excitement.





THE GODSEND

Similar in theme to *The Omen*, Gabrielle Beaumont's *The Godsend* was a pleasant surprise. Devoid of physical horror or violence, *The Godsend* manages a chilling air of menace in its story of a mysterious child adopted by Malcolm Stoddard and Cyd Hayman. The angelic child causes the deaths of the couple's four children and eventually splits the parents' marriage, thereby ensuring her own safety and security with the mother. The film is underplayed and by never actually showing the deaths of the children or a deliberately violent act by the adopted monster, Ms Beaumont helps the audience to understand the divided emotions that Cyd Hayman's mother undergoes. *The Godsend* is an impressive film and all the more interesting that a woman should have directed a film in a genre almost totally dominated by men.



THE INN OF THE FLYING DRAGON

The Inn of the Flying Dragon, an Irish/Swedish co-production directed by Calvin Floyd, is a commendable effort to film a literary adaptation of a story by gothic novelist, J. Sheridan Le Fanu. Quite beautiful to look at but statically directed by Floyd, who previously lensed the Swedish documentary *In Search of Dracula*, the film finely flounders on its own literary pretensions. As expected, Patrick Magee takes the acting honours in this tale of suspected vampirism and gothic intrigue and more than makes up for his embarrassing cameo in *Hawk the Slayer*.

HAWK THE SLAYER

The less said about ITC's *Hawk the Slayer*, the better. Touted as the first *Sword and Sorcery* film, *Hawk* is closer to fairytale land than the fantasy landscapes of *Conan* or *Thor*. The film's slender budget shines through in every scene, from sets and models of incredible tattiness to the dire script and special effects, most of which were achieved on set. Jack Palance as the evil brother Voltan, overacts appallingly and newcomer John Terry as Hawk hardly acts at all. The pseudo disco score is a further misjudgment in a film full of such mistakes. Why ITC should choose *Hawk the Slayer* rather than *The Monster Club* for the Paris festival remains a mystery.

MACABRE

A first film from Lamberto Bava, son of the late master of Italian horror cinema, Mario Bava, has to be an event at any fantasy film festival and, indeed, *Macabre* proved to be a truly extraordinary film. Made in Italy and with exteriors shot in New Orleans, the film is a sombre psychological study of sexual obsession. A mature woman, Jan Baxter (Bernice Stegers, currently on view as the star of the new Fellini film, *City of Women*) is involved in a car accident in which her lover is decapitated. She steals the severed head and keeps it in the refrigerator. Her pubescent daughter (a superbly bitchy performance by the young Veronica Zilly) has already drowned her baby brother, which directly caused the accident in which her mother was involved, was jealous of her mother's love affair. The blind landlord of the house in which apartment d'amour is located also has problems...

Any synopsis of *Macabre* is bound to make the film appear to be the worst kind of Italian exploitation. However, *Macabre* is far from that. It is a psychological casebook of obsessions in which virtually every major character is deeply disturbed. The film is stunningly directed by Lamberto Bava and is in the finest traditions of a type of Italian cinema pioneered by his father, Mario.



THIRST

Australian vampires? According to Rod Hardy's film *Thirst*, there are 70,000 vampires at large in the world. Not your average sun-shunning night stalkers, these modern vampires have special blood farms fully equipped with high-tech milking machines for the drugged donors. An outrageous plot certainly, but the film almost succeeds because of it. However, like most Australian films, *Thirst* suffers from slow pacing and a disjointed editing rhythm which robs the film of its impact. Pretty entertaining for all that, and the generous 'helpings of blood kept the Paris audience screaming.

CANNIBAL APOCALYPSE

Yet another variation of the cannibal/zombie theme is Antonio Margheriti's *Cannibal Apocalypse* from (where else?) Italy. I can't say I've ever been actually offended by a film as much as by this one. Its story of Vietnam veterans who have picked up a nasty rehid virus which turns them into human flesh eaters is distasteful in its exploitation of ex-soldiers from that disastrous conflict. Margheriti leaves no movie reel unturned in his filmic steals. The *Deerhunter*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Rebid*, *Assault on Precinct 13*, *Dawn of the Dead*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and even *Taxi Driver* are all in there in some shape or form and there is even a *sbu-Goblin* disco horror score as well. The goriest scenes have obviously been trimmed up quite a lot, although there is still plenty for the passing deviant to enjoy. It's a thoroughly nasty and offensive film and one that leaves a bad taste after seeing it.

CONTAMINATION



Lewis Coates (Luigi Cozzi) was the director of the lamentable *Starcrash* last year. His new film, *Contamination*, is a shameful rip-off of two films, *Alien* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (new version). Set in 1990, *Contamination* tells the story of a Mars Mission which brings alien spores back to Earth. These are egg-like pods which, upon maturing, explode in a gooey mess, contaminating any humans in the vicinity. Before you know, chests are bursting left, right and centre. Cozzi introduced his film to the packed and expectant house as one of "terror and blood". Sorry Luigi — "bloody" yes, "terror" no. Also a word about the *Alien Cyclops* which makes a brief appearance in the film's last moments — laughable.



WITHOUT WARNING

I suppose it was the success of *Alien* which inspired *Without Warning* though this American film rightfully belongs in the class of the 50s science fiction horror B-film. Efficiently directed by Greydon Clark on an obviously minuscule budget, the film features Jack Palance and Martin Landau chewing up the scenery while an egg-headed alien stalks the countryside, hunting human food and trophies. It's all quite good fun really, what with its oversexed teenagers and the little frisbee/pizza monsters the alien uses as its weapons. By the end of *Without Warning* at least two thirds of the small cast are dead at the hands of the alien and once the monster has been blown to pieces the camera pans up to a starry sky and a voice intones in all seriousness, "We ain't alone".

THE BUTTERFLY MURDERS

The *Butterfly Murders* (Hong Kong, 1979) has already garnered a cultish following in England. Just what it was doing at the Paris festival is unclear, as the film is really a martial arts mystery. Superb photography by Fen Ching-Yu and some well staged martial arts sequences add up to great fun and the unravelling of the mystery of the killer butterflies is intriguing. But fantasy it isn't.



LA CHASSE SAUVAGE DU ROI STAKH

So finally to the one film for which I found it impossible to stay the course. Russia's entry was a long winded fantasy which (I think) had something to do with flying horses. Probably a combination of the Russian dialogue, French subtitles and no action made *La Chasse Sauvage du Roi Stakh* just too much to take. I quit after a little more than half of the film's 100 minutes plus running time, and from all reports the film continued much as it had begun.

THE NAMOS CHRONICLES



Above: Photographer Gordon Gray and producer Allan Lee set up a special effects shot for *The Namos Chronicles*. The model was built by Alan Marques. Below left: The members of the Riding Lights Theatre Company. Below right: One of Alan Marques' spacecraft.



From beyond the stars comes a messenger, a metal capsule containing material from the archives of the planet Namos. Earth scientists set about processing the data and discover that the communication from across the galaxy takes the form of several stories of a somewhat philosophical nature.

The *Namos Chronicles* is a film strip, produced by the Sound and Vision Unit of the Scripture Union, under the guidance of producer Allan Lee. The filmstrip relates several parables from the New Testament against a backdrop of interstellar war. The Namos Federation is locked in a violent and bloody struggle with its arch enemies, the Kapriens. Within the framework of the conflict several incidents parallel the stories told by Christ to illustrate points in the Christian philosophy.

The filmstrip project was hatched by Allan Lee in an attempt to make religious instruction

more pleasurable and more fun for the semi-mundane schoolchildren of today. His first major production job was a children's filmstrip, *Follow the Leader* with Roy Castle. It was as he was adding the finishing touches to this that the idea for *The Namos Chronicles* hit him. "After all," says Lee, "Jesus used pictures that were familiar to the people around him to tell them about the basics of the Christian faith. He used ideas about agriculture, the conflict with the Samaritans, the everyday relationship of a father and son — all everyday things to a 1st century Jew. It seems natural for us in the 20th century to use pictures that we are familiar with."

Having the idea is one thing. Actually putting that idea into practice is another. People like George Lucas have millions of dollars to play with when they make their space adventures. The Scripture Union had considerably less. "Large numbers of people were

very helpful to us — the BBC Visual Effects Unit, for example, gave us lots of advice," says Allan Lee.

The spacecraft were designed and built by Alan Marques. When asked how the models were made he replied simply, "Economically!" Economy was certainly the watchword as Marques elaborates: "The budget was very tight, and the models were constructed out of artists mounting board, which was then clad in polystyrene sheets, with detailing built up on those. I think the technique is quite unusual — most producers can afford to work with more than cardboard!"

The project was particularly challenging for the photographer Gordon Gray. After all, unlike most science fiction productions he was shackled by the limitations of still photography. As Gray himself says, "How do you make a still picture of a spaceship look exciting? What makes a ship look as though it's moving? Although a lot of people were helpful to us in terms of advice, we really felt that we were breaking new ground a lot of the time because of our limited budget, and our filmstrip format."

Many others were involved in the production of *The Namos Chronicles*. The costumes were designed and made by Liz Belmforth, a final year student at Croydon College School of Art. The music was written and performed by Angela Reith and the cast was provided by the Riding Lights Theatre Company, based at St Michael-le-Belfry's church in York.

Production has lasted two years and the project is now finally "in the can". There were, however, the occasional incidents which made producer Allan Lee think that the project would never see fruition. "There was the time that we were filming in the set that was built in the basement of the City Road headquarters of the Scripture Union. The set was built largely of highly inflammable paper and wood. So imagine our horror when one of the electrically fired smoke capsules exploded and burst into flames. The actors moved hurriedly into position, fondly believing they were in the middle of a more spectacular than usual take, whilst the photographer and I rushed for the fire extinguisher. Then, those same jinxed smoke capsules misbehaved during model photography. The studio air conditioning cleared the smoke and smell quite happily — and smugly deposited it in a nearby committee room!"

For further information about *The Namos Chronicles*, please send a stamped, addressed envelope to:

Allan Lee,
Sound and Vision Unit,
Scripture Union,
Scripture Union House,
130 City Road,
London EC1V 2NJ.



A SPECIAL STARBURST FEATURE ON THE FABULOUS

COLLECTING FAN

A TIDAL WAVE OF TERROR
ENGULFS THE SCREEN



S WORLD OF HORROR AND SCIENCE FICTION ART

NTASY POSTERS



Far left: The American 14" x 36" insert poster for the Ray Harryhausen film *It Came from Beneath the Sea* (1955). Above centre: The British quad (30" x 40") poster for the Hammer movie *One Million Years B.C.* (1966). Below centre: A limited edition print from Chimeria Distributing Company. Limited to 1000 signed and numbered copies the print features *The Second Drowning* by Don Maiz. Above left: Another limited edition print also 1000 signed and numbered copies, this time of the cover artwork for the book *The Devil Wives of Li Fong* by E. Hoffmann Price. The artwork is by Rowena Morrill. Below left: The British quad poster for the film *The First Men in the Moon* (1964). Below: One of a series of four posters by Keith L'ange. This poster is entitled *Geyte Force* and like its three companions it is in full colour measuring 24" x 17" on heavy art paper.





COLLECTING FANTASY POSTERS

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Collecting film posters has been known since the earliest days of cinema. Some of the posters from the most famous movies, particularly the first issue posters, are frighteningly costly. For example, the original poster for King Kong can be priced at anything from 2000-5000 dollars, depending upon condition. And the original US poster for Metropolis could set you back a whopping 25000 dollars for a perfect specimen.

However, over the last few years, non film-related fantasy posters have come into vogue. There is little doubt that this fairly new artform owes much to the work of Barry Smith, the British artist whose work on Marvel Comics' Conan did much to elevate comics above their crude, early roots. Smith formed his own company, Gorbliney Press based in New York, after leaving Marvel Comics in 1973. He began to produce a series of limited edition posters, usually around 1000 per print, at a price that most could afford. The bulk of his customers were the comic fans that knew and loved his work on Conan. The first few published posters were black and white, but as his fame and confidence grew he moved into the area of colour. Perhaps his best-known work of this period was the piece entitled *Pandora*, a limited edition of 1500, the first 1000 of which were signed and numbered and the remaining 500 signed only (strong that the unnumbered prints should be fewer and therefore rarer!).

After this, the floodgates opened. Just about every comics artist decided that he, too, would produce a series of limited edition works: posters, prints, portfolios and even sculptures. Some met with success, others dropped out of the field and went back to drawing comics. Suddenly the limited editions were less limited than some would have liked.



Above: A plate from the portfolio *Strange* by Marshall Rogers. Right: The poster *Pandora* by Barry Smith, the print which almost singlehandedly started the whole trend.

The *Future Woman* posters are available from: L'Ange Aerographics, 30 High Street, Kingston, Surrey. £1.98 each plus 35p p&p for one, 45p p&p for two or more.

Devil Wives of Lee Fong and *Second Drowning* are £6.00 each plus 35p p&p. *Strange* is £7.00 plus £1.00 p&p. *Midnight Angels* is £12.00 plus p&p. All available from Bittoo Books, 191 Spital Road, Maldon, Essex.

Pandora and The Fantasy Works of Alex Nino are out of print.

Film posters are available from The Cinema Bookshop, 13-14 Great Russell Street, London WC1 and Mr T. Green, 4 Ravenshoe Road, London SW12. Please send an SAE with all enquiries.



It is plain that the most successful during this cycle were those artists whose work was thin on the ground anyway. It seemed that to succeed in the prints business you had to work seldom rather than well.

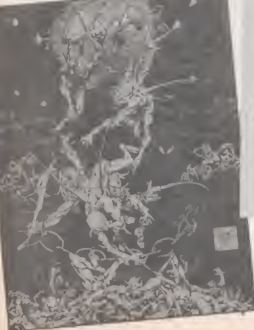
As an investment, limited edition prints are not such a good idea. There is no evidence whatsoever that the value of such limited editions increases with their age. In fact, there is practically no traffic at all in second hand examples of limited editions. It is likely that a second hand copy of *Pandora* could be obtained for little more than its original published price. But then, the original intention of such prints was to provide examples of art, produced free from the restrictions of deadlines and printing processes, for the aesthetic pleasure of the collector — end no doubt the artist.

By far the better investment for the speculator is the rare film poster. Film posters are in demand by film fans around the world. And there are more film fans than there are fantasy art lovers. Consequently, there are less posters and a greater demand. In turn, the prices escalate. Conversely, it must be remembered that the 25000 dollar price tag on a perfect, original Metropolis film poster took 55 years to be realised.

No doubt aficionados of both types of posters have their own opinions on the matter. Certainly, interest in both types of poster shows no signs of tailing off.



Above: A plate from the black and white portfolio *Midnight Angels* by paperback cover artist Boris Vallajo. Left: A plate from the full colour portfolio *The Fantasy Worlds* of Alex Nino, now long out of print. Opposite: The poster *Evelyn Chameleon* by Keith L'Ange.



HAWK The SLAYER

**A STARBURST
FILM REVIEW**

by Alan Jones



Well, there is a sword, and there is a little bit of sorcery in Hawk —

The Slayer but that doesn't mean that this cheap little film can be considered mainstream sword & sorcery, in the accepted sense of that phrase, at all. Director Terry Marcel and producer Harry Robertson's hurried entry in the sword & sorcery stakes looks like an old television episode of *Ivanhoe* or *Robin Hood* — Hawk is not so much a Slayer as a medieval Lone Ranger!

This film is a very big disappointment. I watched some of it being shot at Pinewood studios last Spring and held out high hopes for it. Marcel and Robertson's enthusiasm for the project was infectious. They were convinced they could make a film on the scale of Hawk with a minimal budget. Marcel's description of the sword fights as being "something to top Spaghetti Westerns and Kung-Fu films", sounded really exciting. So what happened? Either the battles in the film were edited down to get an A certificate or they didn't really work in context because what is left of them in the film is very lacklustre indeed. And as to the allusion to Spaghetti Westerns, all there is in that department is a horrendous sub-Ennio Morricone disco score.

The story deals in basic Good and Evil and is the story of two brothers. Hawk (*John Terry*) is strong and destined for greatness and Voltan (*Jack Palance*), hideously deformed and the practitioner of legendary cruelty. Hawk has sworn to avenge the murder of his father by Voltan and gets his chance when the Abbess of Caddonbury (*Annette Crosbie*) is abducted by Voltan and ransomed at a high price to the High Abbot (*Harry Andrews*). Gathering a band of trusty henchmen together, with the help of a witch (*Patricia Quinn*) he has saved from being burnt at the stake, Hawk sets out to rescue the Abbess and vanquish his brother. However he hasn't taken into account Voltan's jealous son Drogo (*Shane Briant*) and the double-crossing Sister Monica (*Cheryl Campbell*).

Once past the point of Hawk gathering his motley crew together, all interest gets lost in a fairy tale where one swordfight

follows another with alarming swiftness and with little point, except to disguise the fact that there is no narrative thrust to the story. Hawk is a one line idea fleshed out in the extreme. There are attempts to inject some humour between the giant, Gort (Bernard Bresslaw) and the dwarf Baldin (Peter O'Farrell), but they are as misguided as they are unfunny. However it isn't this pantomime humour that finally sinks the film, it's the acting. There is the usual overacting by Jack Palance and the very bad acting of Bernard Bresslaw who must still think he's doing a Carry On movie. Then there is the non-acting of John Terry as Hawk! To be fair Terry told me he had little acting experience and he felt a bit out of his depth surrounded by the other professionals in the cast — but to have a vacuum where the all-important title role should be is a mistake of incalculable proportions. There is a sub-plot showing Voltan killing Hawk's fiancée, Elaine (Catriona MacColl) in a vague effort to make the audience sympathise with Hawk, but it just doesn't work.

While it's good to see a film that relies on cinematic and physical effects for a change, (as opposed to effects optically produced) Hawk only reinforces the theory that this sort of film cannot be made cheaply. The magic snowstorm, which was filmed using ping pong balls covered in a reflective tape looks exactly like a lot of ping pong balls covered in reflective tape.

Terry Marcel sees Hawk as "the James Bond of the '80's" and has a series of sequels based around the saga of the mind sword in preparation. Well, good luck to him and to the proposed sequel Hawk — The Destroyer, but for the moment the only audience I can see liking Hawk is a Saturday morning matinee one. In the words of one of the more hysterical unintentionally funny lines contained in the film, "The Hunchback will have something to say about this." Or will he, like the rest of us, shrug it off to experience and wait for the real start of the sword & sorcery genre which will be next Christmas with *Dragonslayer*?

Hawk the Slayer (1980)

John Terry (as Hawk), Jack Palance (Voltan), Bernard Bresslaw (Gort), Ray Charleson (Crow), Peter O'Farrell (Baldin), Morgan Sheppard (Ranulf), Patricia Quinn (Woman), Cheryl Campbell (Sister Monica), Annette Crosbie (Abbess), Catriona MacColl (Elaine), Shane Brant (Drogo), Harry Andrews (High Abbott), Christopher Benjamin (Friarwater), Roy Kinnear (Inquisitor), Patrick Magee (Priest), Ferdie Mayne (Old Man), Graham Stark (Sparrow), Warren Clarke (Scar), Declan Mulholland (Speed), Derrick O'Connor (Rall), Peter Benson (Black Wizard).

Directed by Terry Marcel, Screenplay by Terry Marcel and Harry Robertson, Music Harry Robertson, Director of Photography Paul Benson, Edited by Eric Boyd Perkins, Art Director Michael Plattwood, Production Supervisor Denis Johnson Jr, Master-of-Arms John Waller, Stunt Coordinator Eddie Stacey, Camera Operator Bob Kindred, Special Effects by Effects Associates, Producer Harry Robertson, Executive Producer Bernard J. Kingham, A Chips Production, Time: 93 Mins.

Cert: A



Opposite above: Jack Palance portrays Voltan, a man "whose cruel perversions know no earthly limit," it says here! Opposite below: John Terry as Hawk the Slayer.

Above: Hawk the Slayer and his band of henchmen, (left to right) Gort (Bernard Bresslaw), Ranulf (Morgan Sheppard), The Woman (Patricia Quinn), Hawk (John Terry), Baldin (Peter O'Farrell), and Crow (Ray Charleson). Right: Hawk and Elaine (Catriona MacColl), caught in one of the film's quieter moments. Below: The Final Showdown. Hawk puts an end to the villainy (and overacting) of Jack Palance as Voltan.





The Passion of Jennie Logan

With Christopher Reeve's time travel movie set for release any time now, the US movie makers have beaten him to the punch, with *The Passion of Jennie Logan*, similar in plot and starring Lindsay Wagner. A

Starburst Preview by
Tony Crawley.



The Bionic Woman has beaten Superman to the punch... in time-travel.

While we still await the critical fate of Christopher Reeve's first non-Supie starring role, in Richard Matheson's *Somewhere In Time*, Lindsay Wagner has quickly jumped into the same scene, acted her own time-travelling (indeed, reversing) tale before the cameras, got it into the editing suite... and on to tv screens in America.

Her tv movie is called *The Passion of Jennie Logan*, written and directed by Audrey Rose's Frank de Felitta from David Williams' novel, *Second Sight*.

As usual in America, when a big movie reveals too much of its scenario in public, the smart television operators move in and rip it off. This was the reason Steve Spielberg kept so much of his *Close Encounters* shooting secret. "I don't want to see it next week on Laverne and Shirley," he said.

What Chris Reeve has to say about Lindsay Wagner's tube-movie is not on record. Their stories are extremely close.

Both films are romantic, more than scientific fiction. Both feature people of here, now and today, mysteriously trans-

What Chris Reeve has to say about Lindsay Wagner's tube-movie is not on record. Their stories are extremely close.

ported to a previous century. Both films have their lead stars then falling for someone they meet in the past with all the complications that entails.

And for a final connection, just look again at the time-past picture of Lindsay Wagner in her mirror. It could be Jane Seymour, Chris Reeve's love in his film. Both women look identical as two time-capsules, down to the very hair-style and high collared dresses...

Lindsay becomes irresistibly drawn back in time after moving into a charming Victorian mansion in Chesapeake, New York, with hubby Alan Feinstein. The new house represents a new chance for the couple. Jennie Logan (Lindsay's role, of course) has found that hubby has been straying. She, too, strays soon enough, to her own private sanctuary in the old house — the attic, which she finds full of relics from a bygone age, including a fine old dress. Once she tries the dress on — she is gone from now and arrives in 1899 and becomes head over heels in love with a young artist (*Marc Singer*, from *Roots: The Second Generation*).

It turns out, but of course, that her new lover is/was the first owner of the house the Logans are now living in.

Lindsay learns more than that — the painter has been murdered on the very eve of the turn of the century. She begins investigating this ancient crime, and piecing together enough of the salient facts she dresses up, and indeed back again, in an attempt to do that which Chris Reeve was never supposed to do in *Superman* — alter the course of events.

However Lindsay's movie turns out — and it's expected to be released in Europe as a cinema film — the writer-director Frank De Felitta is well satisfied with the result. It is, so he says, an assignment he couldn't pass up. "I actually believe in second sight," he says. "I believe that we

have lived before and I believe we'll live again." Such was his premise in *Audrey Rose*, of course, and he now has another supernatural novel published called *The Entity*.

Also in keeping with the Chris Reeve film, Lindsay Wagner's *Passion of Jennie Logan* is stronger on beauty than effects. Time-travel is the hub of both features, not the entire machinery.

"*Passion* had to be a feast for the eyes," comments Frank De Felitta. "It had to be a joy to look at. I wanted it to be lovely in every way. Visual beauty, you see, is a marvellous counterpart to fear. Far-out effects don't really get you

anything... I knew that all the transitions had to be done with cuts, with the camera. I wanted to use just sound, music and the camera."

"And he did," glows Lindsay. "And it works. We didn't need special-effects. The more real something is, the more frightening it is." Spoken like a true veteran of all those bionic absurdities.

Footnote: Lindsay's tv-movie, like her last one, *The Incredible Journey of Dr. Meg Laurel*, was set into motion and co-executive produced by a certain Ron Samuels. Who? The husband of Wonder Woman Lynda Carter!

Below left: Marc Singer plays the painter from the past with whom Jennie Logan (Lindsay Wagner) falls in love. Below right: Jennie bones up on a little past history. Bottom: The love that traverses the years? Lindsay Wagner and Marc Singer in a scene from *The Passion of Jennie Logan*. Opposite page: A portrait of the two faces of Jennie Logan.



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BRIAN CLEMENS

interview II

In this the second part of our interview with Brian Clemens, the writer/producer talks to John Fleming about his life and work.



Although Brian Clemens claims to have lived a bland life, it has been pretty tough. For ten years, he was married to an ex-model called Brenda; they divorced in 1966. Then Diane Enright, Diana Rigg's stand-in for the 1965-67 *Avengers* series, was with Clemens for ten years. But, in 1976, she committed suicide. There was also a particularly acrimonious and very expensive court-case in 1975 when Clemens accused writer Terry Nation (see *Starburst* 6/ of

copying his idea for the *Survivors* tv series. Clemens claimed he had registered the series format with the Writers' Guild in 1965 and asked the High Court "to rule that the ideas were his property and told in confidence to Mr Nation between 1967 and 1969". Nation and the BBC defended the case. To this day, both Clemens and Nation believe they were the innocent party and are reticent on the subject — neither will talk about the case except off-the-record.

One thing Clemens will talk about, though, is the astonishing fact that he seldom pre-researches any facts for his highly-detailed plots: "I don't really believe in research," he says. "Usually I do the plot and then go back and research it. And it's strange, really, because I'm usually 99% right. It's curious that a layman's knowledge is usually enough. After all, though, if you're writing something about science, it's got to ultimately appeal to a layman, so it works like that. I did a fringe theatre play about the Moors Murders which had a certain amount of success at the King's Head and The Rock Garden (two London fringe theatres). And, as a result of the publicity, I met the Chief Constable of Lancashire who was in charge of the case. There were certain things I'd put into the play which were not in the public domain at all — I'd invented them — and it turned out they were absolutely true. That was only interpreting the known facts, really, from a dramatic point of view."

Clemens directed the play but what he would really like is to direct another film. "I could have done *The Professionals* or *The New Avengers* or something," he says. "But that's not really... I'm not diminishing it... But I think you've got to be a really experienced director to put anything on screen in ten days that means something. Having only directed one film (Captain Kronos: Vampire Hunter 1972) I'd probably direct a very bad *Avengers* under those circumstances. You do need plenty of preparation time."

A few years ago, Clemens was quoted as saying that tv directors don't have a visual imagination, so he was starting to write visual directions into his scripts. But this is not a true reflection of his views; his point is much more subtle: "I don't think they're idiots," he says. "I think the system's idiotic. Within [video] tape tv, they never get a chance to develop a visual sense. [Director] Desmond Davis told me that the difference between tape and film is that, with tape, you have to place the camera always just not quite where you want it to be. This is because a tape show is shot "live" with three or four cameras which can get in each other's way; film is shot with a single camera and each "angle" is shot separately. Clemens also believes, "The machinery behind tape means that a director is always subjugated to the system and so never gets a chance to develop his own style. Series like *The Sweeney* and *The Professionals* have probably liberated new directors more, in a few weeks, than they ever got in years in tape. You see, I believe that there is ultimately only one place a camera should be in viz a viz a certain scene or emotion — the placing of the camera creates the emotion. You just have to watch any Hitchcock movie to find that out. [Director] John Ford never zoomed

in his whole career — a cut from wide to close-up is so much more incisive and more controllable too — and he rarely panned either. He just composed wonderful shots, played scenes within the shot, then cut to the next bit."

Another factor which limits creativity on material shot exclusively for television is, according to Clemens, the internal restriction imposed by unrealistic time-schedules. He gives as an example any episode of his Thriller series [made and currently being re-screened by ATV]. Each Thriller, he says is made up of plot and atmosphere and, like a good joke, depends very much on exact timing: "All the Thrillers I did I could improve 50% with an extra day and a half of editing. You see, you're taken over by the system, where you edit from A-Z. As the time runs out, the last reel — which is the most important — is the one you're doing quickly. And over that 3-day edit, you might have three film-editors. Now that's rather like having Van Gogh and his brother and sister paint a portrait and I don't understand that. It offends me, because it means that what they're putting on the screen they don't really give a **** about. If they really did, they'd say *We can't have three editors! It's got to be one man.* I mean, that's traditional in the media: you don't change the director or the star of a stage-

play halfway through. It's exactly the same. Getting back to the thing I said about television directors... There are some film directors — Lean, Ford, Kurosawa — if I see a shot of their work I can tell it's theirs. You can't say that about many television directors, if any."

Clemens was involved in scripting major movies, early in his career, such as *Station Six Sahara* (1964) and *The Peking Medallion* [1964 aka *The Corrupt Ones*] but it was not until after *And Soon the Darkness* (1970), which he also produced, that he decided he really wanted to be a director himself. "My partner [Albert Fennell] said *You should have directed it and suddenly I thought yeah, perhaps I should have done. I knew I could have directed it better.* Then I wrote and produced a film for Hammer *Dr Jekyll and Sister Hyde* (1971) and, in the meantime, we wrote an original screenplay called *Buff* which Bryan Forbes [then head of production at ABPC] agreed I would direct. Then he was thrown out, so I was left with the script and that became *Blind Terror* [1971 aka *See No Evil*] with Mia Farrow, which Dick Fleischer directed."

Clemens got his chance to direct when Hammer accepted his storyline for *Captain Kronos Vampire Hunter* (1972) now a cult film.

"The name Kronos is Greek for time,"



Opposite: Mrs Emma Peel (Diana Rigg) and Tara King (Linda Thorson) meet for the first time. Inset: Writer/director/producer Brian Clemens on the set of *Kronos Vampire Hunter*. Above: Tara King (Linda Thorson), cunningly disguised in a blonde wig, takes aim. *The Avengers*.

says Clemens, "and I thought that, if the idea took off, I'd be able to move him through the centuries. A whole series of films. I even had some follow-up stories."

For Clemens, Kronos represented the return of the film hero. "You see," he says, "in all the Dracula films, Dracula's the hero so you're rooting for a villain and you know he's going to end up staked through the heart. I thought, well, it's good to change the emphasis and have a proper hero. So I invented Kronos, who's a swashbuckling character with a hunchback aide and he picks up a beautiful bird [*Caroline Munro*] along the way and they're vampire hunters. And I think why people such as the *Time Out* reviewers like it is because I turned the genre upside down and had a speech from the hunchback which really liberated all vampire films. A guy says *But these girls were drained of youth. They die very old. They can't be vampires.* And the hunchback, who's the authority, says *There are as many species of vampire as there are beasts of prey. Their method and motive of attack varies and so does the way you kill them.* Some you can't kill with a stake through the heart; some you have to kill by decapitation or hanging, drowning and so on. It's a super scene in Kronos where they have a vampire, tie him to a chair, put a stake through his heart and he lives and they hang him and burn him and they gradually find out he's got to be stabbed with a piece of holy steel. It did liberate all the vampire lore."



Above left: *Tara King* (Linda Thorson) displays some of her fighting skills against *Gregor* (Roma Gorrara) in *The Avengers* episode *Legacy of Death*. Above right: A remarkably similar scene from *The Avengers'* fore-runner *Police Surgeon*, this time with *Ian Hendry* pitted against villain *Harry H. Corbett*. Above centre: A portrait of *Steed* (Patrick Macnee) looking as suave as ever in the *Avengers* revival series, *The New Avengers*, wherein *Steed* was teamed with *Purdie* (Joanna Lumley) and *Gambit* (Gareth Hunt).



The film is a combination of Errol Flynn swashbuckler and Hammer horror. It climaxes in a three-minute swordfight between Kronos and the vampire. "It's got this marvellous moment," says Clemens, "Where Kronos stabs him with the wrong sword and this vampire walks around with this rapier through him. There's quite a bit of humour in it."

Tragically, Hammer/EMI kept the film on the shelf for two years, not releasing it until 1975 and then giving it poor distribution as part of a double feature. Clemens is uncertain why his film was treated in this way but thinks it was probably "a tax loss/tax shelter thing".

"I really enjoyed *Kronos*," he says. "I was on a peak then; I was ready to go into another thing and make it better, but it didn't happen. I was hoping to make another *Kronos* adventure, but then I got into *Thriller* for tv — I did 43 of those, which is quite a lot, really. They're 90 minutes each in America — 72 minutes running time — which is quite a lot of writing." Nonetheless Clemens is so prolific that, at the end of the series, he still had another 20 plots lined up and ready to go. He says he enjoyed doing the *Thriller* stories and found them pleasant and rather easy to do: "Easy because they weren't locked into running



Below left: A particularly grisly scene from *Kronos Vampire Hunter*. After discovering a vampire's invulnerability to the traditional wooden stake, *Kronos* and his partner *Groat* set about finding an alternative *Achilles Heel*. After trying hanging and burning they finally stab him accidentally with a piece of blessed steel. Which does the trick. Below right: Patrick MacNee's *Police Surgeon* co-star *Ian Hendry* turned up as a guest in *The New Avengers* in the episode *To Catch a Rat*.

characters and you could just let things happen as you wanted". Plotting comes quite easily to him: "If, in a one-hour show, you've got four highspots, you've just got to link them. Sometimes it can be just a single brilliant idea. I mean, with *Alien*, people just went to see the thing burst out of his stomach; they didn't really know what the rest was about. With *The Exorcist*, they went to see the bloke puked-on. In *Bullitt*, it was the car chase."

Today, though, Clemens is an executive as well as a creator, a producer as well as a writer. So does it cause problems being a producer and a writer and a sometime director? "Well, it's not as difficult for me as for some," he says, "I've always been a co-producer, so *Albert [Fennell]* is my conscience. He's very good at editing and I think I am too, but it's silly when you get too omnipotent. I think that's destroyed a lot of good people; it destroys stars. How many people have said *I'm going to produce my own film* and it sits on the shelf? I think you need objectivity. I think that's very, very important."

It's a lesson he probably learnt from bitter experience on *The Avengers*. A lot of tv and film production decisions are a matter of internal politics and personal

whim. For instance, Diana Rigg was not the original choice to play Emma Peel in *The Avengers*. The original actress cast for the role was Elizabeth Shepherd who, most unusually, was not screen-tested. "That wasn't my decision," says Clemens. "That was Julian Winkle's choice because he was executive producer. Liz Shepherd had done something on television and she was undeniably very beautiful and it wasn't until we did 1½ episodes... She's not a bad actress, but she just doesn't have a sense of humour at all and it was essential in *The Avengers*. So we scrapped what we'd shot and got rid of her and then tested — which is what we should have done in the first place — and out of the tests came Diana Rigg. We tested a lot of people, like Moira Redmond and that sort of person and one or two unknowns like Sarah Brackett — whatever happened to her? — and Diana Rigg was head and shoulders above everybody else."

Clemens worked for a total of six years on various *Avengers* series and then, when Diana Rigg left the show, he was suddenly thrown out. "I was sacked at the beginning of the Linda Thorson ones," he says. "It was internal politics. *The Avengers* was owned by ABC Television and there was a great deal of back-biting because they'd brought in outside boys to make probably their greatest hit ever. Still is. If you go to America with Patrick MacNee, you can't walk down the street even now — I promise you. In New York and





Above: *The Professionals* Doyle (Martin Shaw), Cowley (Gordon Jackson) and Bodie (Lewis Collins) pose for a publicity photo for the first episode of *The Professionals*, *The Acorn Syndrome*.

California, you really cannot move if you're with him and they're all saying *Hello Steed*. His impact, internationally, is enormous. ABC resented outside boys and thought it was easy. So they got rid of us and brought in some of their own boys and, within 1½ episodes, they asked us to come back because it really was going to fail. Unfortunately [the producer] had brought in his girlfriend, Linda Thorson, whom I would never have cast. And so we were stuck with her. Which is why I brought in the character of Mother — because she [Thorson] had no sense of humour either. I brought in Mother so Patrick MacNee could at least have jokes with somebody."

Even so, the series proved unsalvageable and ended in 1968. Almost a decade later, Clemens, Albert Fennell and composer Laurie Johnson formed *The Avengers* (Film & TV) Enterprises Ltd. British financiers were not interested, so *The New Avengers* was produced with £3.4 million in French and later Canadian money. This time, there was no chance taken with the female lead. Before Joanna Lumley was cast as Purdey, Clemens seriously considered 700 girls, interviewed 200, read scripts with 40 and screen-tested 15. "Most *Avengers* fans," he admits, "don't like *The New Avengers* as much as the old ones, but it did actually get a bigger audience." Although costing £125,000 per episode to produce, it was financially successful. The irony was that, although Clemens could sell the finished product with ease, he was unable to get the initial finance in Britain. When I talked to him last year, he had been trying to finance another series of *The New Avengers*. He told me: "London Weekend Television will put up half the

money and CBS in America want to pay us 140,000 dollars an episode and we're short 50,000 dollars an episode and we can't get it anywhere — otherwise we'd make more *Avengers* — and *The Avengers* is really like printing money because it just goes on forever and it's got assured syndication — they've already got 87 of the first one." So far, new financing for *The New Avengers* has not materialised. "I don't know why that is," Clemens tells me. "I mean, why didn't Britain put up the money for *Star Wars* and *Superman*? They were made here but the money wasn't put up here. Most of our industry's run by people who just don't care much. At least Sam Goldwyn cared and Lew Grade (of ATV/ITC) cares. At least he's making movies. You may not like them — some I don't like — but he's making them."

The New Avengers was sold to Canada, though its scripts make no concessions to foreign audiences.

The Professionals started out costing £115,000 per episode but is now costing about £150,000. It was sold to Canada, although its scripts make no concessions to foreign audiences. The first offer of US syndication was turned down because it was too low — 50,000 dollars per show (about £25,000 at the time). Recently, a million-dollar deal was negotiated by Clemens' Mark One Productions and London Weekend Television (who co-finance the series) for the showing of 39 episodes on US cable tv. The deal also includes "substantial" American money for the production of future episodes and Clemens is also "hopeful" that a *Professionals* feature film will be made,

probably with American financial backing. It is astonishing that Clemens, with his extraordinarily successful track-record, has had so much trouble raising finance in Britain. He's an international success. His original episodes of *The Avengers* are still showing in America and were networked again recently by CBS; *The New Avengers* series has been networked twice across America. And he is still trying to keep one step ahead of the trends.

"All drama goes in cycles," he says. "If it's been kitchen sink for four years, don't think kitchen sink. I wanted to do *The Magnificent Seven* story as knights in armour — indeed, I was commissioned by EMI and then it all fell through — and now I see Ridley Scott's project *Knight* (now to be directed by Walter Hill and retitled *The Sword*). That could well open up that area and it would then be too late for me to follow it because, by the time I get in, there'll be lots of them — *Return of the Knight* and so on. The same with science fiction — it must come down again. If you can be the innovator or number two, you're all right."

So what sort of projects has he in mind? Well, there's *Bamboo Martini*, which Rank planned to shoot before they collapsed. And there was a Vincent Price comedy-thriller which has also had problems. What's it about? "Well, it's about transporting a dead body from one bed to another across the whole of America. If you can imagine that Jimmy Carter is having an affair in Boston and is supposed to be in Washington and has a heart attack and his mistress then comes to Vincent Price and says *He's got to be found in his own bed on Monday morning*, well that's it."

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'IT'S ONLY A MOVIE!'

A regular column
by author and
Starburst film
critic John Brosnan.

The title above is particularly apt this month because I want to discuss the current campaign being waged against the film *Dressed to Kill* and similar horror movies by the Women's Movement and others. Now I can't make any great claims for films as tacky as *He Knows You're Alone*, *Prom Night* etc, nor do I feel entirely comfortable about defending them but I really do feel that the attacks are getting somewhat ridiculous.

Typical of the sort of thing I'm talking about was a piece written by the editor of the trade magazine *Screen International*, Peter Noble. Adopting a breathless tone of high indignation Mr Noble described some of the horror films he was

complaining about but in a way that suggested he hadn't actually seen many of them. Here, for instance, is his description of *Dressed to Kill*: "... it's about a transvestite killer who dresses up as a woman and stabs everybody else in the cast!" Everybody? Well, I remember he killed Ms Dickinson and that he appears to kill two other people but by the end of the movie the majority of the cast are still unstabbed.

Mr Noble gets it wrong about *He Knows You're Alone* too. "There is a lot more blood about at the end, when the maniac is shot to death and a policeman is stabbed to death." The maniac is shot but not to death. When last seen he is still alive and acting suitably maniacal. And as

for *Terror Train*: "Jamie Lee Curtis, who narrowly averted being cut up in *Prom Night* comes to a sad, sick end in *Terror Train*." What? She may have looked a little sad and sick after what she'd been through (see review this issue) but our Jamie certainly didn't come to any end.

Okay, the fact that Peter Noble was so shocked by these movies that he couldn't remember much about them doesn't automatically invalidate the central point which is: "Has the time come to stop the flow of blood and especially to stop making films dealing with brutal attacks on women?" With this he is repeating the accusation of the feminists that these type of movies are made by men with the sole purpose of titillating other men with



Above: The film which started the whole trend. John Carpenter's low-budget horror money-spinner, *Halloween* (1978).

be used to create actual physical equality between the sexes. As a stop-gap measure in the meantime I quite like the idea suggested by actor George C. Scott in a recent interview. He thinks that all women should be allowed to carry a gun which would be known as a "feminist gun". He admits this scheme would have its drawbacks — innocent men would be shot by women by mistake etc — but it would certainly cut down on the number of violent attacks made on women.

Whether banning movies like *Dressed to Kill* would achieve the same result is the big question. I have my doubts but for feminists the answer is clear: "This movie is an incitement to sexual hatred!" declared a protester during a demonstra-

tion against the film in Leeds during which a cinema screen was splattered with red paint. But is it really? As I said in my review in *Starburst* 28 *Dressed to Kill* is certainly an erotic movie but hands up all those male readers who came out of the film seething with sexual hatred? Personally I don't think the average male watching *Dressed to Kill* wants to see the Nancy Allen character get caught by the killer — on the contrary he is more likely to be cheering her on all the way (I know I was). The same goes for Angie Dickinson though in her case it was fairly obvious that she was doomed from the start (I've seen *Psycho* many times but I always have this futile hope that somehow Janet Leigh will get through the

shower sequence unscathed whenever I see it again).

And let's not forget that many women like these sort of films too! After all, it would be downright sexist to suggest that only males enjoy being frightened by horror movies. To prove my point I conducted an extensive research programme and asked two handy women if they had enjoyed *Dressed to Kill*. They both said yes and neither thought it was sexist (I would have asked more but I thought I'd stop while I was ahead).

Let's face it, most horror fans don't take these movies very seriously — he or she knows it's all a game being played between the film-maker and the audience. Everyone knows the rules of the game

scenes showing attractive women being hacked to death. As one American feminist put it: "They represent some kind of answer to the Women's Movement, a response which has been brewing since women became more liberated . . . this is one way that Hollywood's male chauvinists are hitting back."

Really? I would think that theory is nothing but feminist paranoia and that the real reason so many movies like this are around at the moment is that they make money. It's not some sinister male chauvinist conspiracy but the usual Hollywood game of trying to rip off a successful movie by churning out quick imitations of it. *Halloween* was the big success so, voila the floodgates open and the

blood gushes out. But if John Carpenter had made an equally successful film about a girl called Jill the Ripper who goes around killing male psychopaths when the moon is full then our cinemas would be full of similar productions right now (actually, that's not a bad idea! Interested producers contact me now. I'll call it *She Knows You're Alone* When *Halloween* Falls on Friday the 13th).

I'd also suggest that the reason girls are so often the victims in these movies is not so much due to some sinister male conspiracy but because it's easier for a director to engage an audience's sympathy for a character in a potentially dangerous situation if that character happens to be a vulnerable looking young

girl rather than someone who looks like Charles Bronson or the Incredible Hulk.

"But aha!" cry the feminists, "That's exactly what we mean! These movies reinforce the traditional male image of women as victims, the very thing we're trying to eradicate!" Well, yes, they've got a point there, I've got to admit. In the long-running battle between the sexes women have traditionally come out second best mainly because nature has stacked the deck against them in the physical sense. But it's my belief that the Women's Movement is never going to have much success in changing basic male attitudes to women or achieving real equality until the science of genetic engineering reaches the point where it can



Left: A young girl in danger in *He Knows You're Alone*. Right: Nancy Allen in *Dressed to Kill*.

and it's up to the director to try to out-smart the audience he knows will be sitting there trying to out-guess him. *He Knows You're Alone*, for instance, signals its tongue-in-cheek attitude from the very beginning with its opening sequence set in a cinema where two girls are watching a bad horror movie.

Of course none of this proves that there aren't loonies around who actually *do* get turned on by what they see in the screen and then go out and commit rape or murder. In answer to that I can only fall back on the old argument that anyone who is so unstable they can be triggered off by something they see in a movie is already a danger to the public. And once you start trying to remove all

the things in films, television, plays, books, magazines and comic books that may be potential triggers for such people where do you stop?

By making horror movies, and any movie with an X-certificate on it, the scapegoats for what they find wrong with society the feminists are not only being excessively simplistic but are indulging in the dubious techniques of Mary Whitehouse — which confirms my suspicion that sometimes so-called "militant feminism" is simply old-fashioned Puritanism under a new name.

I'm as tired as anyone of the current trend in horror films — the "mad killer who hacks his way through a group of people seeking revenge for the time

someone tied his shoelaces together and he fell over in front of the classroom" genre — not only because some are genuinely distasteful but because they're so boring and predictable (I'm impatiently waiting for the next cycle of horror films, the werewolf one, to arrive though I suppose the moment a werewolf dares to bite a female victim the feminists will have his pelt on a pole) but I still think this campaign against them is very disturbing. It wouldn't surprise me if this wasn't the first step in a move towards the imposition of a much stricter system of film censorship and that's a prospect I don't relish at all.

A Column by Tise Vahimagi

He has been called the "Shakespeare of speculative fiction", has won six Hugo Awards, two Nebulas, two Special Achievement Awards from the World Science Fiction Convention, an Edgar Award, and three Writers' Guild of America Awards. He has been acclaimed as one of the most honoured science fiction novelists and television scenarists. He is Harlan Ellison, the *enfant terrible* of sf.

The reason my thoughts this time are concerned with Harlan Ellison comes from BBC-tv's second season of *The Outer Limits*, particularly following the telecast of *The Children of Spider County* episode. It remains for me a top-notch teleplay, from the typewriter of Tony Lawrence. Sensitive and emotional, exciting and dramatic. In short, a sheer pleasure to view. This was definitely the period of "poetry and power" for tv, especially in the field of the *telefantastique*. The 1960s, with special emphasis on the early '60s, was a wonderland of creativity and imagination on the home screen. This was a time when the splendid skills of such artists as Rod Serling, Richard Matheson, Charles Beaumont, George Clayton Johnson, William F. Nolan, Robert Bloch, Joseph Stefano, and Harlan Ellison regularly graced the small screen.

It is no surprise, then, that one of the most exciting and imaginative talents to emerge, via the tube, from these esteemed ranks was Harlan Ellison. Ellison's teleplays are a curious phenomena, they reflect more of the man behind the script than the visions of the characters in the script. For the most part he is a man of conflict, a conflict which his characters explore and evaluate. Ellison's problem, however, is one of understanding. The battle to understand, and make understood, new forms and ideas. He is an idealist, a rebel, and although his responses may often take the form of social judgement his thoughts and beliefs make him truly a founder member of the city of the edge of forever.

Ellison has written for series as diverse as *Burke's Law*, *The Outer Limits*, *Cimarron Strip*, *Alfred Hitchcock Hour*, *The Flying Nun*, *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, *Star Trek*, and *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* At the close of this column I will list what I personally consider to be six of the best Ellison teleplays, selected from the above-mentioned work.



When Ellison first arrived in Hollywood in 1962 (he was one of Painesville, Ohio's most brilliant exports) he was warned by the late Charles Beaumont that "attaining success in Hollywood is like climbing a gigantic mountain of cow flop, in order to pluck one perfect rose from the summit. And you find when you've made that hideous climb . . . you've lost the sense of smell". A near-perfect example of this formula-over-format, corruption-over-creativity is related in the introduction, by Ellison, of *Phoenix Without Ashes* (co-authored by Ed Bryant). It is the story of a writer of original ideas/dreams versus the front office of cop-out and cliché. In this case, Harlan Ellison's dream of *The Starlost* and the money-hungry business suits exploiting that dream.

The Starlost, by way of quick breakdown, is the story of a world within a

world. It is the story of a space ark, one thousand miles long and comprised of hundreds of self-contained biospheres, each populated by a segment of Earth's race and culture. A generation later, after the initial lift-off, an accident kills the crew and seals off each "world". These worlds now grow and develop in their fashion, without any outside influence. That is until one man is forced to break out of his biosphere-world and discovers that he is part of a floating universe.

20th Century-Fox wanted to do a "sort of *The Fugitive* in space" series, and Ellison was called. He related his idea and was greeted with "Fresh! Original!" He simply smiled and recalled that the actual concept went back to the early 1920s. Fox wanted an outline immediately, in order to sell it, but weren't prepared to pay cash up front; Ellison gave them a 7-minute cassette tape. Speculative writing

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is frowned upon in the Writers' Guild but no one had thought of speculative talking. Contrary to all promises, Fox immediately transcribed the tape and reverted it to speculative writing. This they sold to all points of the compass, resulting with the actual combine of 20th Century-Fox, NBC-TV, producer Glen Warren, and CTV (Canadian Television). Although the money men really had a very faint outline on their hands, effects-man/director Doug Trumbull and *Analog* editor Ben Bova became involved in the project. Front office-wise, things were turning sour for Ellison's original idea. Despite opposition, his idea was being changed into a simple-minded, marshmallow, comic strip adventure. One example being that pre-production advertising featured a bullet-shaped rocketship being torn apart by a meteorite. Nevertheless, Ellison struggled to

correct the situation. The show, the producers, everybody involved needed him. Eventually, faced with a situation akin to a man trying to milk a dead rat believing, against all logical odds, that it's really a cow, Ellison chose to pull the ripcord and jump out of a ludicrous situation which was now becoming out of control. When a flock of self-confessed non-sf-wise Canadian writers were brought in to rewrite *The Starlost* Ellison wisely hit them with the Guild ruling that a writer can decide on a pen name. Credits for the show now contain "Created by Cordwainer Bird". The producers ripped out their hair and chewed up the carpet but the ruling had to stick. These same producers even called in Gene Roddenberry to try and save their shadow of a show, asking him to produce the series. Roddenberry declined and was asked to suggest a suit-

able producer. He replied: "Harlan Ellison. If you hadn't screwed him so badly, he could have done a good job for you."

Harlan Ellison may be a rebel with too many causes but he may also be the ultimate warrior of American TV writing. The seekers of creative television owe a salute to the perseverance, the doggedness, the outlandishness, the pursuit of artistic justice, the ultimate idealism of Mr. Ellison. Long may he fight the unsubtle masses of the Matmos who with every touch subvert the course of creative tele-writing in those who strive for something new and original.

1. *Who Killed Purity Mather?* ('63) Burke's Law director: Hy Averback. cast: Eileen O'Neill, Janet Blair, Wally Cox, Gene Barry, Charles Ruggles, Telly Savalas, Gloria Swanson, Mary Ann Mobley. Police chief Amos Burke gets a message from a witch, a message calmly announcing he is to be murdered. It also gives the names of all likely suspects.

2. *Soldier* ('64) *The Outer Limits* dir: Gerd Oswald. cast: Lloyd Nolan, Michael Ansara, Tim O'Connor, Catherine McLeod, Jill Hill, Alan Jaffe. A futuristic military man who has been trained from birth to kill appears in the modern day and is taken in by a scientist's family.

3. *Demon With a Glass Hand* ('64) *The Outer Limits* dir: Byron Haskin. cast: Robert Culp, Arline Martel, Abraham Sofaer, Rex Holman. A man is being hunted by hostile aliens in the confines of an office building, his only source to the reasons why depend on the knowledge in his glass hand.

4. *Memo from Purgatory* ('64) Alfred Hitchcock Hour dir: Joseph Penney. cast: James Caan, Tony Musante, Mark Slade, Lynn Loring, Walter Koenig. Author researching the world of street gangs joins one in order to experience the life and hazards of the mean streets.

5. *The City on the Edge of Forever* ('67) Star Trek dir: Joseph Penney. cast: William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley, Joan Collins, David L. Ross, John Harmon. Kirk and Spock follow a deranged McCoy back to Earth's 1920s and are put in a position of deciding Earth's future.

6. *Knife in the Darkness* ('68) Cimarron Strip dir: Not known. cast: Stuart Whitman, Jennifer Billingsley, David Canary, Jeanne Cooper, Philip Carey, Tom Skerritt, Patrick Horgan, George Murdock. US Marshal pursues a Jack the Ripper-type killer terrorizing the Strip.

BOOK WORLD

Douglas Adams is so famous nowadays that one feels a certain reluctance to give him any more publicity, but I'd be failing in my duty if I didn't note the appearance of *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe* (Pan, 95p). This is the sequel to and continuation of Mr Adams' no 1 best-seller of 1979, *The Hitch-Hikers Guide to the Galaxy* (the book, not to be confused with the radio series, the record, the stage play, the ballet or the opera). No doubt it will be equally successful — particularly since it is nicely timed to be in all the shops when the tv series hits our screens in mid-January. Before long there will be nobody left to whom phrases like "don't panic" or "forty-two" are just ordinary words devoid of special significance.

Not that I begrudge Mr Adams his success: it's just that I feel the cult is getting more than a little out of hand. *Hitch-Hiker* was the best radio comedy for a long time, but it wasn't that wonderful. The books are similarly amusing — in a style which suggests a collaboration between Harry Harrison, Robert Sheckley and Monty Python — but I doubt they have any more appeal than any other humorous sf to people who aren't already devotees of the programme. In fact, the chief function of the books is as an aid to recalling the radio programmes. They're little more than scripts fleshed out with minimal descriptive touches, and as you read the voices of Peter Jones and company flash vividly into your mind.



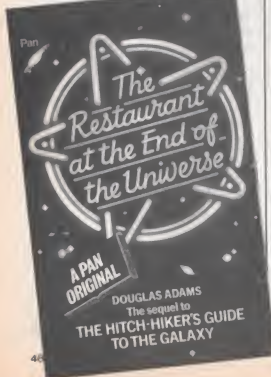
A more sophisticated humour is to be found in John Sladek's *Roderick* (Granada, £6.95), which has appeared earlier than I intimated last month. It's subtitled *The Education of a Young Machine*: a strong early clue that you're about to embark for parts satirical. The *Roderick* of the title is — or becomes — a robot. Initially he's a tremendously sophisticated learning programme devised by a brilliant computer programmer; when encased in a small metal body he becomes a robot "child", with a clear identity and personality, and a learning capacity and intellect beyond the ordinary human. He's designed in a laboratory, but when his future is threatened by an obscure American government agency, which hovers sinisterly in the background of the book, terminating with extreme prejudice to all concerned any successful attempts to develop artificial intelligence, *Roderick* goes into hiding with, as it were, foster parents. As he grows up, goes to school, gets involved in an unlikely series of adventures, so we get a view of our society through the doubly-clear vision of a robot child.

What emerges is a panoremic view of the absurdities of modern American society, from the ignorant academics talking high-sounding gobbledegook as they teach ever more debased "disciplines", through the trendy priest more

interested in his school's sporting achievements than his pupils' spiritual development, to the doctor so busy investing his vast income in grandiose business schemes that he never has time actually to see his patients. The picture which emerges is one which does human beings little credit. Indeed, the central irony of the book is that its only fully human character is *Roderick* the robot: all the real people operate to some degree according to a set of reflex responses, generally programmed into them by the media (they behave like people they've seen on TV); only *Roderick* really thinks for himself.

It's an ambitious, densely-written novel, consistently witty from page to page. But it isn't wholly successful for all that. One major problem, I felt, is that Sladek is so good at capturing the flavour of his characters' meaningless, jargon-ridden conversation that he over-indulges himself in recording it, and among all this verbal noise the message gets a little lost. It's impressively well-written, though — Sladek has more affinity with modern "mainstream" American writers like Rob Swigart (whose *Time Trip* I reviewed last month) than with other sf writers — and well worth reading. Sladek's earlier novels — *The Reproductive System* and *The Muller-Fokker Effect*, both of which I recommend — are funnier, but *Roderick* has more substance.

On a different level of ambition is the latest of E.C. Tubb's long Dumarest saga, *Prison of Night* (Arrow, £1.10). This is the 17th novel in the series (it's up to no 22, mind you, in the USA), and it shows no sign of ending. The format is quite simple. It's the far future, humankind has spread right across the Galaxy, colonizing hundreds, or thousands of worlds, Earth itself is a half-remembered legend. Earl Dumarest was born on Earth, but has grown up far from his home. The series details his efforts to find it once again. His quest throws him into continual opposition with the Cydan — a network of unemotional "cybernetic" humans whose goal is domination of the galaxy and who are controlled by an underground organic computer on Earth. Each volume typically finds Dumarest on a new planet, getting involved with some mystery or intrigue there, and picking up a new hint or shred of evidence as to Earth's whereabouts. In theory it could go on forever; in practice it will doubtless continue as long as Tubb is willing and able to sustain it. On the evidence so far that's a remarkably long time.



This month regular book reviewer John Bowles looks at the latest offerings from Douglas Adams, John Sladek, E.C. Tubbs and Josephine Saxton. Next month *Book World* makes way for *Record World* for one issue only and *Book World* returns in Starburst 32.

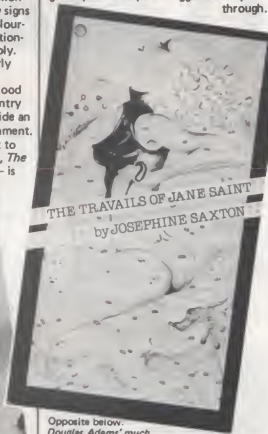
Dumarest's accumulated adventures must run to considerably more than a million words by now, and Tubb shows few signs of flagging. He's good at devising colourful locales, on which he sets fast, action-packed stories tinged with melancholy. They are often violent, but are clearly written by a man with a distaste for violence: no sadistic wallowing in blood here. *Prison of Night* is an average entry in the series, any of which will provide an enjoyable couple of hours' entertainment. Try one: there's no need to attempt to read them in order (though the first, *The Winds of Gath* — if you can find it — is one of the best).

E.C. TUBB PRISON OF NIGHT



I'd hoped to be able to say nice things about Josephine Saxton's *The Travails of Jane Saint* (*Virgin*, £1.95), because Ms Saxton is a talented writer who has produced a handful of extremely vivid short stories. Her novels are less successful, though (this is her fourth but, although she is an English writer, the first to be published in this country). It's described as "a thrilling adventure in the enchanted realm of the female subconscious", which is accurate enough apart from the word "thrilling". Jane Saint is a revolutionary leader undergoing brainwashing through sensory deprivation. In the tank where she floats she manages to transport herself into another world: a fantastic realm in which she has bizarre adventures. Unfortunately I found them

rather unreadable bizarre adventures and gave up the unequal struggle halfway through.



Opposite below. Douglas Adams' much awaited (by both public and publishers) sequel to *The Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy* (now a tv series, don't miss the interview with Adams' in next month's *Starburst*), *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe*. Like its successful predecessor, it is a patchy offering with flashes of inspiration. Opposite above: John Sladek's *Roderick* presents a more sophisticated style of humour, with a more satirical slant than *Restaurant*. Left: E.C. Tubb's *Prison of the Night* is the 17th in the Dumarest epic, which deals with Earl Dumarest's quest to find Earth. Above: *The Travails of Jane Saint* explores the bizarre world of sensory deprivation and its effects on the heroine of the title, Jane Saint.

Virgin — Josephine Saxton's publisher — is a new publishing house: the latest offshoot from the music-business conglomerate. Its main emphasis seems to be on music-related books from the serious (*The Rolling Stone Record Guide*) to the not-so-serious (*Rock Stars in Their Underwear*). They also have a small fiction list, which under the guidance of Virgin Books boss Maxim Jakubowski (himself an sf writer, critic and translator) is oriented towards somewhat avant-garde science fiction. Their only other novel to date is *White Light*, a first book by American writer Rudy Rucker. In the works, among other things, is a large

anthology edited by Jakubowski himself on sf and music (original stories), but there's no sign as yet of *SF Writers in Their Underwear*.

If you want to find out more about some of the people who write sf, try to pick up a copy of Charles Platt's *Dream Makers: The Uncommon People Who Write Science Fiction* (*Berkley*, 2.75 dollars). A British edition should be forthcoming next year from the erratic Savoy Books; in the meantime the American paperback can probably be found in one of the many specialist bookshops around the country. It's a collection of 28 interviews with 29 writers (husband-and-wife team Damon Knight and Kate Wilhelm share an interview), and it's very well done. The interviews are written up into short articles, the style varied adroitly to suit the subject, and what emerges is a much more rounded picture of the writer than you get from the standard question-and-answer session. Platt is least strong, oddly, with the authors he knows best (Ellison, Moorcock, Spinrad) — perhaps it's best to be detached from the subject. Other subjects are a virtual Who's Who of sf writers — Asimov, Disch, Sheckley, Vonnegut, Pohl, Delany, Bester, Farmer, Van Vogt, Dick, Bradbury, Herbert, etc etc. I read through its 284 pages — or rather, devoured them — virtually at a single sitting... and then went back and reread selectively, picking up fascinating snippets of anecdote and opinion on practically every page.

Finally, a couple more snippets of news: the publishers of American girls magazine *Gallery* are following the example of *Penthouse* (who launched *Omni*) by starting a fantasy magazine called *The Twilight Zone*. It's named, of course, after Rod Serling's famous tv series, and aims to publish "stories that could have been part of the original programme". First issue appears next March, but I have as yet no information on a British edition.

On a sadder note: George R. Stewart died on August 22nd, aged 85. Stewart was an American Scholar of some distinction, but is sure to be best remembered for his single sf novel *Earth Abides*, the story of the few survivors of a disease which wipes out nearly all the human race. It was the first winner of the International Fantasy Award (in 1951, two years after its original publication), and has been in print almost continuously since then. Many critics regard it as one of the greatest of all sf novels.

the art of VIDEO MAGIC

A lot has been written about special effects and almost all of it has been about film effects. But a totally different set of techniques are used in television, on shows like *Dr Who* and *Blake's 7*. Electronic effects use television technology, not film technology. At its simplest, it's the technology that puts pictures behind newsreaders — pictures which you couldn't see if you were in the studio. To find out how electronic technology is used in television fantasy shows, John Fleming went to BBC TV and talked to A.J. 'Mitch' Mitchell, one of the Corporation's three Video Effects men. There are none in ITV and no direct equivalents anywhere else in the world.

"I did Barry Letts' *Doctor Whos*, which were the first ones with colour, with a whole lot of electronic type effects in them."

Mitch says he was "very lucky". He started by pulling cables and then drove camera cranes. All in all, he was an assistant on just under 300 shows and cameramen on around 600. When he started at the BBC, there was a small group called Inlay Operators. These, basically, flicked a switch to 'inlay' pictures on captions — the process in black and white television of electronically cutting a hole in one picture and laying another picture in it.

Mitch worked as an Inlay Operator on the BBC's attachment scheme, under which you can do somebody else's job for short periods. "I did this three month attachment," he told me, "and it was total chaos. I did [producer] Barry Letts' *Dr Whos*, which were the first ones in colour, with a whole lot of electronic-type effects in them. I got quite interested and, in the end, did it for six months. The shows were really chaos because the inlay man was just an operator and he wasn't in charge. There was no specialist dealing with the photographic side of effects at all. I'd worked on shows which had over-run their allocated studio time because the effects hadn't been properly planned. During my six months, we unofficially started to plan them between us and things were actually beginning to work. But it was very frustrating and, at the end of the six months, I went back to the camera department. In 1970, I wrote a paper suggesting the BBC employ Special Effects Cameramen. Four years later, the job of

John Fleming interviews BBC Electronic Effects Operator A.J. "Mitch" Mitchell, one of the only three Electronic Effects specialists in the world.



Electronic Effects Operator (EEO) appeared and I was offered one of the posts."

Since then, with the EEO's expertise and the sophistication of electronic equipment both growing all the time, the BBC's video effects have improved dramatically, although money is always a limiting factor.

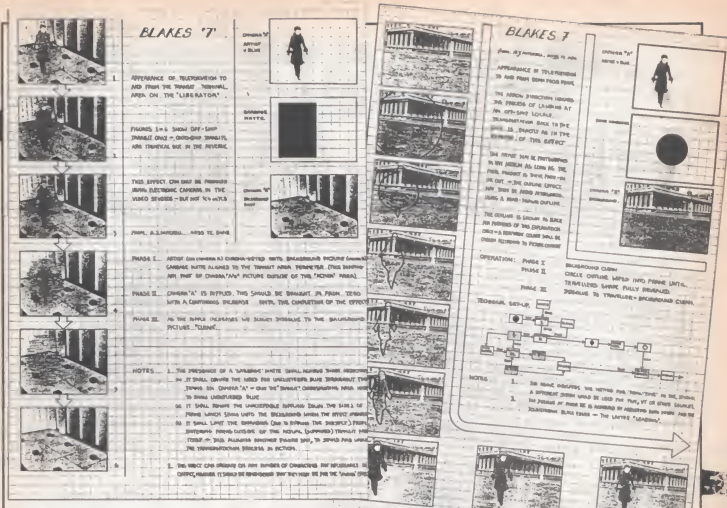
The first season of *Blake's 7* was under-budgetted [see interviews with producer David Maloney in *Starburst* 18 and effects man Ian Scoones in *Starburst* 21]. At the end of the first series, David Maloney wanted to simplify the teleport technique because creating the effect was relatively time-consuming and therefore costly. But the effect was so popular with viewers, it was decided to make no change.

"The original concept at the start of the series," says Mitch, "was that they wanted to have a teleport system similar to *Star Trek*, but they didn't want the same effect because people would say they were copying *Star Trek*. The script editor [Chris Boucher] thought it would be useful to discriminate between when

Laser rays from guns are hand-drawn and are always static — people don't move and shoot at the same time.

they were on the Liberator and when they weren't. So the brief was to produce an effect which was completely different from *Star Trek* and which was different on and off the Liberator. It meant a director could shoot a close-up of an actor teleporting and, because the effect was different, you could tell if he was on the Liberator or a Federation ship — because very often the interiors look alike when you're in close-up. The other part of my brief was that the effect had to be capable of working and looking the same on film, on pre-recorded video-tape and in the studio."

The end result is complicated but, when simplified, goes like this. The transporter in the Liberator uses chromeKey (also known as colour separation overlay or CSO). This is similar to, but not the same as, the blue-screen matting technique used in feature films. Two pictures are combined and the second picture only "takes" on the parts of the first picture which are a particular colour — normally blue. For the Liberator transporter sequences, the actors stand in front of a blue screen with a camera looking at them. Another camera looks at the transporter set. The two pictures are then combined so that the actors appear to be in the set: the set is electronically 'matted' into the blue areas around the actors. When the first camera's picture is faded, the actors disappear and the transporter set is retained. While the actors are being faded out, an electronic ripple



Above: Pages from the note book of Mitch Mitchell explain how the Blake's 7 transporter effect is achieved. Below: A hand-drawn matte used in the Blake's 7 transporter effect.

effect is fed into their camera so that they appear to waver as they disappear.

"We had a problem with that effect on the last series," says Mitch, "because we moved to a studio with a new, modern type of camera. The new cameras have a safety circuit in them that looks for things going wrong — it shuts down if something looks like it's going wrong and might damage the camera. When we started to do this ripple effect, the cameras shut down because they thought the ripple was a fault. So now we have to disconnect some of the circuits when we do the effects in the studio. And this is not good because, if there were a real fault, the camera would blow up — as it did on one occasion."

"The Blake's 7 brief was to produce a transporter effect which was completely different from *Star Trek* and which was different on and off the Liberator."

This is only the Liberator half of the transporter effect and, because it is always shot on the Liberator studio set, video effects can be used all the time. But when the crew transport onto or off a planet or another ship, the landing may be shot on film in a studio or video in a studio or film on location. This second transporter effect shows the actors appearing within

a white line silhouette of their own shape. If the effect is shot on videotape, the actor stands in front of a blue background, his shape is electronically replaced by black and the blue is replaced by white. This picture is then fed into special equipment which creates a white outline. If the effect is shot on film, the white line silhouette has to be hand-drawn onto the picture.

Mitch explains: "We freeze-frame at the point they're going to disappear and we have a white light source with a sheet of tracing paper taped down to keep it in a fixed position. Then, with Indian ink, we draw round the shape of the actors. This is photographed by a camera and that silhouette is used to generate the pattern that you see surrounding them. But it's not that simple. You don't trace on a tv screen. You have to do it in front of a sort of rostrum camera which is a black and white television camera that looks in a mirror, horizontally, and there's a light box under it. You're looking over your shoulder at a monitor which is over to your right somewhere. So you're looking over the arm that you're drawing with. It's a technique that takes some time to learn: to look at the screen and not what you're drawing. As soon as you look at the drawing itself, you'll lose it."

Laser rays from guns are also hand-drawn and are always static — people don't move and shoot at the same time because that would involve drawing a separate ray on each frame of

picture and there just is not the time or money available. In fact, few lasers appear in Blake's 7. The Liberator crew's gun are just internally-lit perspex tubes; when the light inside is switched on, the other actor falls down as if hit. The Federation guns are props built by the visual effects designers (see *interview in Starburst 20*) which emit a puff of smoke; the person "hit" is wired up for a physical explosion, so no electronic effects are needed.

Doctor Who can sometimes be more complicated. In particular, there was *Underground*, the 4-part story which was screened at the time



Star Wars was released in Britain. The production team made a special effort and more facilities than normal were available at the BBC. Instead of the normal average of about 10 hours, there were 28 hours of post-production work. [That is, picture manipulation done after the live-action shooting in the studio.] One scene involved a fight with a laser shield and shows just how much work can go into something that looks straightforward on the screen.

The effects were created by Mitch working very closely with visual effects designer Richard Conway [who later left the BBC and whose work can soon be seen in the new Flash Gordon movie]. The scene in Doctor Who involved a shield, with a laser gun in the middle surrounded by a deflector. After discussing the problems, Conways designed a shield which included a bright light operated by the actor pushing a button. This had three advantages. The actor looked as if he was firing a gun. The person he aimed it at could see exactly when he had to fall down as if 'hit'. And it also gave Mitch a visual cue for his electronic effects.

So, after the scene was shot in the studio with one actor pressing a button and the other falling down, the recorded videotape was given to Mitch. "We went into post-production," he told me, "replayed the tape and freeze-framed

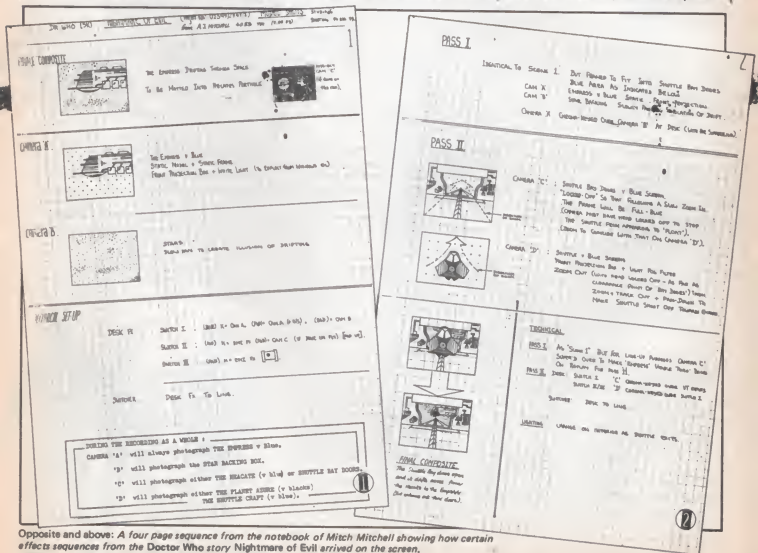
at the point when the men was hit. We then used an electronic shape-generator to produce a soft diamond shape which we then used to electronically cut a hole in the picture end, into that hole, we put green. So what we had, by fading up and down very quickly, was a momentary green diamond-shaped flash on the man's body.

"If the gun is near us, the ray would be thicker at our end than at the far end where it hits the man."

The tape was then replayed again and freeze-framed at the point where Richard Conway's bright light appeared on the shield and the green flash started to appear on the men. "We then drew a ray which would join one to the other," Mitch explained. "This ray was then put completely out-of-focus so it was a very soft line. It was also shaped to give it perspective - If the gun is near us, the ray would be thicker at our end and then at the far end where it hits the men. We fed that signal which, remember, was out-of-focus into a 'dynamic cross-fader' and put black on the outside and green

on the inside. Then, separately, we put the same original signal into an electronic machine which creates colours and we put blue on the outside of the ray itself and red on the inside. Then we adjusted them for brightness so, it's in the thickest part, at the gun end, it would be redder. And it was 'tearing' [in flaring and shimmering] because we were using a 'hard' switch which can't cope with things that are out-of-focus. So it's getting a soft out-of-focus signal and it doesn't know whether it's there or not. The electronics aren't quite sure, so it's kind of flashing on and off. It's a perfect example of what special effects are all about: mis-using conventional equipment for something it's not designed to do."

At any rate, Mitchell had now produced in isolation one ray comprising a shimmering red core with a blue surround. And another green ray against black. These rays had still not been put on the tape with the actors. The rays were fed through more machinery which superimposed the soft green ray on the red/blue ray to give a halo effect. Now was the time to combine it with the live-action scene. The ray had to appear to come out of the laser gun towards the men, who was stunned or killed by it. A card was simply held over the effects camera and pulled away so that the ray was



Opposite and above: A four page sequence from the notebook of Mitch Mitchell showing how certain effects sequences from the Doctor Who story Nightmare of Evil arrived on the screen.



Above: Some of the crew of the BBC production of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Left to right: Sylvia Thornton (make-up artist), Mitch Mitchell, an unidentified camera-man and director Alistair Reid.

"On *Blake's 7*, we were quite often given half an hour to do all the effects for one episode and no post-production at all. When you consider all the effects are done in 30 minutes recording time, I mean... [laughs] What you end up with is a lot of rushed, ragged things not as good as they could be. At the moment, if someone does come along with the money to give it enough time, they'll do it on film."

Some of the current problems of bias are epitomised by the *Nightmare of Eden* story in last season's *Doctor Who*. It was the first time in the history of the programme that all the modal shots were done on videotape not film. Mitch doesn't think it was a great success, though. Originally, the effects were scheduled to be shot on 35mm film at Bray Studios. Shooting was to take four days with a special effects camera crew from the feature film industry. The *Doctor Who* producer wanted to try electronic effects and this was agreed by the BBC facilities department. Only later, close to shooting, was it discovered what the "swag" entailed. Instead of four 8-hour days of filming, the director was given 2½ hours in the video studio: the "standard exchange rate" between film and video. "So," says Mitch, "we ended up shooting all the modals for the four 25-minute episodes of that story in 2½ hours and it's only the expertise of the cameraman that made it look as good as it did."

"People watch the news and current affairs programmes and they see chromakey that's slung together. A blue screen's stuck up which might have too little or too much light on it [the exact shade of blue is critical] and it might have a shadow on it and it was literally put up in 30 seconds. The whole thing's rushed like that and so you get people with huge blue halos and great black lines down their sides and video effects get a lousy name. But the thing is that, on the shows where it's good, nobody notices. If the effects do work and it's not a science-

fication production, people don't realise they're looking at a video effect. The opera *Verdi's Macbeth* had an enormous number of mattes, glass paintings, electronic mattes, giant scans done with chromakey with hundreds of extras in front of them. I had someone walk up to me at the press show and tell me it was disgraceful I had a credit on it for doing next to nothing. He just hadn't noticed any of the effects."

"Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde is an expensive production and, although for once video effects were chosen, no one will realise they're watching video effects."

"And now you've got things like the Quantel 5000 machine, which is the beginning of digital video effects. You can enlarge the picture four times, infinitely zoom out so it goes into a dot and disappears, move the picture around, squeeze it, flip it, tumble it. These things would cost a fortune to do optically on film. One of the problems with video until about two years ago was that, unlike film, you never had the single frame of picture available to you. [Videotape is a brown material like sound tape. The picture is not visible; it is electronically encoded onto the tape.] All you could do was run it at full speed and see the picture. There was the video disc, which they use for action replays on sport, but they're very expensive machines and the BBC's one is basically given over to sport — it's very difficult to get time on it."

Recent developments have meant that new videotape machines with "digital frame stores" will display individual still frames from the moving picture which has been recorded. Once these frames are available to the effects man, he can manipulate them.

On the last season of *Blake's 7*, digital equipment was available on certain days. For one scene, Mitch and the crew shot a white

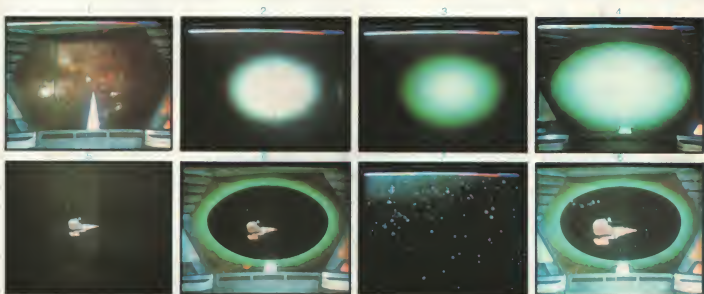
modal spaceship against black drapes and recorded that image so that they had a freeze-frame of it in one of their digital effects systems. They then pointed one camera at a starry background and another at the picture of a planet. They electronically combined the two pictures. The next step was to link the effects system containing the freeze-frame of the white spaceship to a device which "mattes" anything bright and ignores anything dark. The machine was then told to memorise two frame positions — one with the spaceship off-screen to the left; the other with the ship off-screen to the right. Mitch then told the machine to move from the first position to the second, which it did. The spaceship in the frozen frame floated across while matted into the combined picture of the planet and stars.

A similar technique was used when Mitch and visual effects designer Colin Mapon co-operated on the *Nightmare of Eden* story for *Doctor Who*. "We had to have a butterfly bite Romana on the neck," Mitch told me. "And we were so short of time we couldn't fly a real modal. In fact, there wasn't time to do anything about it at all, so the scene as shot in the studio just showed Romana grasping her neck and falling down. When we got to post-production, the producer Graham Williams said *Look, you'll have to fix that shot somehow: it just doesn't stand up*. So we got a flashing light which was created electronically. It was a glowing thing that wavered — a wobbling dot, really. We put that through a digital effects system and matted it by brightness on top of the pre-recorded image of Romana. We recorded a lot of positions for the frame that had this dot in it and then just pressed the buttons and moved it around the pre-recorded image. We'd pre-determined the point where it hit her neck and just timed it so that the thing was in the right position at the right time."

That's an everyday complication of video life. More complicated still is Mitch's work on the new BBC *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, which combines film and video techniques. "We've shot most of the material for the transformation sequences on 35mm film," he told me. "That way, we got days and days to do it. Then we transferred it all onto video tape and did the effects using video technology. The thing is, if you don't know there's lots of video effects in the show, you won't realise. It is an expensive production and, although for once video effects were chosen, no-one'll realise they're watching video effects because the money's been spent well and they work."

Rounding off, I asked about the fourth season of *Blake's 7*, which is to be produced by long-time *Blake* director Vera Lorrimer. Mitch won't be working on it, but he will be working with ex-*Blake's 7* producer David Maloney on the BBC's new day of the Trifids. "It was going to have visual effects by my old chum Ian Scoones," Mitch told me. "But he's left the BBC to do the House of Hammer series for ITV. So David Maloney's filched another *Blake's 7* man, Steve Drewitt, to do visual effects on the Trifids."

It sounds as though it should be well-worth waiting for.



Above: A series of photographs showing how the effect of the view screen aboard the Liberator is achieved. 1. The camera shoots the blank screen on the Liberator bridge set. 2. Then a "key" generator is used to produce an oval shape, white on black with softened edges. 3. This image is fed into a "colouriser" which is set up for green and black. 4. The result is matted into the blank view screen on the Liberator set (see 4). This time the equipment is adjusted to matte the image in with a hard edge. 7. Because the image of the space ship had only a few stars, a caption showing more stars is shot. 8. This image is matted into the screen over the previous composite to give the finished effect. Below: Mayhem on the bridge of the Liberator. A spectacular display of physical effects.



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